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THE WOMEN

OF

EARLY CHRISTIANITY;

A Series of Portraits,

WITH APPROPRIATE DESCRIPTIONS BY SEVERAL AMERICAN CLERGYMEN.

EDITED BY

REV. J. A. SPENCER, M. A.,

AUTHOR OF

"THE EAST: SKETCHES OF TRAVEL IN EGYPT AND THE HOLY LAND,"

ETC., ETC., ETC.

SEVENTEEN ORIGINAL DESIGNS ENGRAVED EXPRESSLY FOR THIS WORK.

NEW-YORK:

D. APPLETON & COMPANY,

200 BROADWAY.

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TO

ALL THOSE WHO REGARD WITH REVERENCE

THE FRUITS OF FAITH,

AS EXEMPLIFIED IN THE LIVES AND CONDUCT OF

Holy Women

OF

EARLIER DAYS,

THE FOLLOWING PAGES ARE INSCRIBED.

PREFACE.

The present volume is offered to the public not without some hesitation on the part of the Editor. The novelty of the subject, to say nothing of its inherent difficulties, in opposite directions, naturally gives rise to some anxiety as to the reception the book may meet with at the hands of the reader. The comparatively late period, too, at which many of the illustrious women flourished, has caused the Editor some uneasiness lest it should be thought that the term, "Early Christianity," is stretched too much, when it is made to include as late as the seventh century, and in one case the eleventh century. The scantiness of information, moreover, of a reliable kind, and the acknowledged legendary character of most of what is preserved respecting the holy women spoken of in this volume, very rea-

sonably excite doubt whether the proper medium between fact and fiction will be thought to have been attained, or whether the sensitive feelings of Protestant readers may not be offended by an attempt to interest them in persons of whom so little is known, and that little, too, generally of so small value or concern to any one at the present day.

The Editor, however, is free to confess that he does not apprehend that any very severe censure will be bestowed upon him personally for his share in bringing before the public the "Women of Early Christianity," except it be in respect to the disproportionate amount of matter which he himself has been obliged to furnish. The distinguished writers, who have been kind enough to contribute articles to the volume at his request, are entitled to not only the Editor's thanks, but, what is better, to the gratitude of the public at large; for they have—with, perhaps, the exception of a few incidental expressions—treated the topics, which they had in hand, in a way which must commend itself to the taste, good sense, and piety of all people, who profess and call themselves Christians. Of their labors it is not befitting here to speak—they speak for themselves; and the readers of this volume will judge whether they fall behind, in any respect, the well-earned reputation of the authors, whose names are prefixed to the articles which they have written. In justice to himself, however, it is

quite necessary to explain how it has happened that one-third of the articles are from the Editor instead of from persons of more note and ability than he can lay claim to. The history of the matter is briefly this:

The Messrs. Appletons determined upon the publication of the present volume quite late in the summer; considerable delay occurred before the Editor undertook the work, and he had but little more than the month of August—the worst month in the year to get the aid of a clergyman for any purpose whatever—and a part of September, in which to ask various friends and brethren, as well as strangers to him personally, to contribute articles to the forthcoming book. Delays of various kinds, disappointments of different descriptions, and in some instances, a failure to keep the promises made, hindered and perplexed the Editor not a little, and he was compelled to undertake that which at the first he had no idea of being called upon to perform. At the same time, he begs to thank very heartily those gentlemen who were willing to help him in this rather novel undertaking, and to express his deep and lasting regret that the shortness of the time allowed, before it was necessary to go to press, prevented his obtaining from a number of friends and distinguished divines, contributions of great value and interest. He was assured by them that this was the only reason,—which was his misfortune, not his fault cer-

tainly. In such an emergency as this, then, there was no alternative; somebody had to prepare illustrative matter for the engravings selected; and, perhaps, under the circumstances, the public will think that as the Editor could not well help himself, he is not to be very severely reprehended for doing that which he would most gladly have thanked any one else to do better.

Setting aside, then, any apprehensions on this score, the Editor does not hesitate to avow his conviction that the tendency of a volume of this kind must be good; and he shall feel much disappointed, if it be not found that a taste for literature of a description which includes the lives, career, principles, period, &c., of the illustrious, the pure, and the holy women of early days, is healthful in the community, expansive to the mind, and promotive of sound Catholic views of truth, and of those who have lived and died for it in past ages.

Under these impressions, and with convictions of the kind just uttered, the volume is commended to the earnest regard of the gentle and thoughtful reader. J. A. S.

New-York, *October 6th*, 1851.

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ST. CECILIA.

BY THE REV. W. INGRAHAM KIP, D. D.

I.

The summer's day was declining at Rome. It bathed the Imperial City in a glory which is to be seen nowhere but under an Italian sky. The sunbeams fell upon the Pincian Hill, and glittered on the marble fronts of its gorgeous palaces and the gayly colored awnings which were stretched over their doors and balconies. The groves around shared in the flood of light — it penetrated through the vines which interlaced the trees, brought out into bold relief the groups of statues of fawns and wood-nymphs, tinting them with a delicate rose-color, and even imparted a cheerful air to the stony pines which towered high above them. It darted across the Campus Martius, over the Pons Elius, and sparkled on the ripples of the Tiber as it glided through the city. The porphyry columns reflected back their varying hues — the fountains leaped upward as if to greet the coming of the sunbeam — and the rich light, as it rested on the silent city, seemed to envelop it in a golden mist.

Not then, as now, was Rome a city which was eloquent only of the past. In the third century it presented no ruined aqueducts and crumbling tombs, as the objects most worthy of interest, nor did pestilential marshes girdle round the walls of the Eternal City. Magnificent temples, theatres, and baths, were seen on every side, while around the gorgeous villas of her nobles were luxuriant groves, and the now desolate Campagna was covered with a teeming population. Yet at this hour all was still in the luxurious city. The effeminate people could not brave the sultriness of the day, and except a beggar sleeping beneath the shelter of a wall, or a slave here and there loitering in its shadow, there were no signs of life. Nothing was heard but the soft murmur of the fountains, or the faint monotonous hum of the summer insects as they circled round and round in the heated air.

The hours passed on, until the sun began to sink beneath the waves of the Mediterranean, and at last soft twilight rested on the city. Then it seemed to awake to life, and its varied and motley population poured forth from their homes. They thronged the public walks and crowded the marble colonnades. There were seen the patrician in his gilded chariot, surrounded by fawning parasites — the brutal Gaul — the effeminate Greek — the crouching Jew — the swarthy Ethiopian — all that strange assemblage which Rome had drawn from the four quarters of the earth. They had come forth to the wild revels which formed their evening amusement. And thus the brief twilight passed away, and the shadows deepened, until night and darkness spread their veil over the scene.

Far down in the city, by the side of the Tiber, in that section now called the Trastevere, a crowd was gathered around a dwelling from which Valerian, a young Roman of noble birth, had come to take his bride. At length the procession came forth. The bride, in the first

opening of her beauty, for but sixteen summers had passed over her, was clothed in the long white robe with purple fringe, always worn on this occasion; she bore in her hands a distaff and spindle with wool, while before her was carried the torch of white thorn, and her two attendants supported her on either side. The train of friends followed. The gathering rabble, confident in its numbers, saluted them with those coarse jibes which characterized the license of the lower orders of the Roman populace, while some chanted the Fescennia, which Ovid mentions, those licentious rhymes which had come down to them from early days, and in which they were accustomed to indulge on occasions of this kind. And thus they reached the house of Valerian, where the door was adorned with garlands and flowers, and the bride, struggling with affected reluctance, was borne over the threshold. Then came the feast to the attendants, and the nuptial hymn, "O Hymen, Hymenæe Io!"

Yet in this case the reluctance was not affected. The bride was Cecilia, a noble Roman lady whose name has come down to us in the annals of the Church through more than fifteen centuries, her history forming one of the most beautiful legends which it has bequeathed. Her life and martyrdom are mingled up with poetry and allegory, with all those strange stories which in former ages were so attractive, and to which men then listened with the undoubting faith of children. At this late day it is impossible to separate historic truth from poetic fiction, nor shall we make the attempt. We shall give the legend in all the fulness of its ancient version, as poets have loved to narrate it, and with the scenes on which painters have for ages founded their representations.

St. Cecilia was the daughter of parents who had secretly professed Christianity. It was in the days of Alexander Severus, when the new faith was steadily advancing, yet had not left its safe obscurity to

challenge a prominence which could only bring persecution. The strength of the civil power was still put forth to sustain the fainting energies of Paganism, and often through the Imperial City, as tumults gathered, was heard the popular cry — "To the lions with the Christians!" It was under these circumstances that St. Cecilia grew up in the faith, yet remarkable from her earliest childhood for her enthusiastic piety. Day and night she carried a copy of the gospel concealed within the folds of her robe, and in accordance with the spirit of those times, she made a secret but solemn vow of chastity, devoting herself to heavenly things, and shunning the pleasures and vanities of the world. Yet music was her passion, and in a flood of harmony she endeavored to breathe forth the feelings of devotion which filled her soul. She composed hymns — the legend tells us — which she sang with such ravishing sweetness, that even the angels descended from heaven to listen to her, or to join their voices with hers.

Would you see this idea embodied as the loftiest genius alone could do it? Go to the Gallery in Bologna, and as you wander on, your attention will be arrested by the St. Cecilia, the glory of the collection. There she is, as the painter represented her, in all her heavenly beauty. Her lyre is dropping carelessly from her hand, and with a look of intense devotion she is gazing upward. You see that her spirit is wrapped into ecstasy, not of this world. And there, far above the deep blue, the heavens have opened, and revealed a choir of angels, whose sweet and solemn anthem has arrested the attention of the saint. They are seen but indistinctly, as through a mist, for the artist has touched them with his softest tints. A group of saints is gathered round her, while musical instruments scattered about, fill up the foreground. It is a wonderful picture, and one which no artist that has ever lived, but Raphael, could have conceived or executed.

With her marriage came the time of her trial. In obedience to

her parents she had accepted the husband chosen for her, yet Valerian was still in the darkness of the old religion. How then would he respect her scruples or her vow? Beneath her bridal robes she put on the coarse garment of penance, and as she walked to the temple, renewed her vow, praying to God that she might have strength to keep it.

"The day was comen of her marriage,
She ful devout and humble in her corage,
Under her robe of gold, that sat ful faire,
Had next her flesh yelad her in an haire.

And while that the organs maden melodie,
To God alone thus in her heart sang she;
O Lord, my soule and eke my body gie
Unspotted, lest that I confounded be."*

Yet her faith met with its reward. She told Valerian, that she had a guardian angel who watched over her night and day, and would suffer no earthly lover to approach her.

"I have an angel which that loveth me,
That with gret love, wher so I wake or slepe,
Is redy ay my body for to kepe."†

Won by her fervent eloquence, her husband not only was persuaded to respect her vow, but was converted to the true faith. And

* Chaucer. "The Second Nonnes Tale." † Ibid.

when he desired to see the guardian Angel of whom she spake, she bid him repair to St. Urban, the Bishop of Rome, who at that time had been obliged to seek refuge in concealment from the rage of his persecutors.

II.

On the Appian Way, about three miles from the gates of Rome, on what is now the waste and barren Campagna, is the opening to the Catacombs. Originally quarries from which the stone for the city was hewn, the passages cross and recross, winding in every way beneath the surface, following the direction of the soft rocks, until they form a labyrinth, to thread which would be impossible for any one not familiar with their turnings. At the advent of the Christian faith, as its first followers were always the lowest in the social scale, it was among the *arenarii*, or sand-diggers, the workmen in these quarries, that it gained some of its earliest proselytes. When, therefore, times of persecution came, they put their brethren in possession of these inaccessible retreats, and they became the place of refuge for the infant Church. There the living remained until the storm was over-past, and there the dead were laid to their rest, as we now find them, often with the emblems of martyrdom carved about their tombs.

It was to this place that Urban, the Bishop of Rome, had fled, and there, by the direction of St. Cecilia, Valerian sought him. As here and there he encountered the humble Christians, it was a startling sight to them to see the young noble in these winding passages, and difficult was it for him to persuade any one to be his guide, so fearful were they that he had come with no proper motive. At last, however, his object was accomplished, and he found himself in the

presence of St. Urban. But we will let Chaucer describe the interview.

"Valerian is to the place gon,
And right as he was taught by her lerning,
He fond this holy man Urban anon
Among the saints' buriels lurking:
And he anon withouten tarrying
Did his message, and whan that he it tolde,
Urban for joye his hondes gan upholde.

The teres from his eyen let he falle;
Almighty Lord, O Jesu Crist, quod he,
Sower of chast conseil, Head of us alle,
The fruit of this same seed of chastitee
That thou hast sow in Cecile, take to thee;
So, like a besy bee withouten gile,
Thee serveth ay thine owen thral Cecile.

For this same spouse, she toke but newe
Ful like a fiers leon, she sendeth here
As meke as ever was any lambe to ewe.
And with that word anon ther gan apere
An old man, clad in white clothes clere,
That had a book with lettres of gold on hond,
And gan beforne Valerian to stond.

Valerian, as ded, fell doun for drede,
Whan he him saw; and he up caught him tho,
And on his book right thus he gan to rede;
One Lord, one faith, one God withouten mo,
One Christendom, and Fader of all also,
Aboven all, and over all every wher;
Thise wordes all with gold ywriten were.

When this was red, then said this olde man,
Belevest thou this thing or no? say ye or nay;
I bleve all this thing, quod Valerian,
In tother thing than this, I dare wel say,
Under the heven no wight thinken may.
Tho vanished the olde man, he knew not wher,
And pope Urban him cristened right ther."

And thus it was that Valerian returned to his wife. But as he approached her chamber, he heard the most enchanting music, and entering, beheld an angel, who was standing near her, and who held in his hand two crowns of roses gathered in Paradise, immortal in their freshness and perfume, but invisible to the eyes of unbelievers. With these he encircled the brows of Cecilia and Valerian, as they knelt before him; and he said to Valerian: "Because thou hast followed the chaste counsel of thy wife, and hast believed her words, ask what thou wilt, it shall be granted to thee." And Valerian replied, "I have a brother named Tiburtius, whom I love as my own soul; grant that his eyes also may be opened to the truth." And the angel replied with a celestial smile, "Thy request, O Valerian, is pleasing to God, and ye shall both ascend to His presence, bearing the palm of martyrdom." Thus, like the earliest disciples of our Lord, he was to receive his reward, but "with persecution."* And when the angel had spoken thus he vanished.

It was soon afterwards that Tiburtius entered, and they found the reality of the promise. Perceiving the fragrance of the celestial roses, but not seeing them, and knowing that it was not the season for flowers, he was astonished. Then Cecilia availed herself of the occa-

* Mark x. 30.

sion, to set before him the doctrines of her faith. She explained to him all that Christ had done for us, contrasted his divine mission and all that he had suffered for men, with the senseless belief of the ancient Paganism, and she spoke with such a convincing fervor, and such an heaven-inspired eloquence, that Tiburtius yielded at once, and hastened to Urban to be baptized and strengthened for the contest which was before him. And thus all three were united in the faith, and henceforth their lives were spent in the discharge of its duties, giving alms, encouraging those who were persecuted, and burying the bodies of the martyrs.

III.

There is another scene in this history. Again the rabble crowds have gathered in Rome, but it is in the hope that they may see a Christian die; for maddened in their taste for blood by the exhibitions in the amphitheatre, they eagerly welcome any victims. They have collected around the tribunal of Almachius, the Prefect of Rome, and before it are arraigned Cecilia, and Valerian and his brother. And then they were commanded by the Prefect to desist from their works of Christian charity, but in the same spirit in which Polycarp had replied nearly two centuries before, they answered, "How can we desist from that which is our duty, for fear of any thing that man can do unto us?" Yet, though death was near, their earthly work was not yet done, for the two brothers being committed to prison, in charge of a centurion named Maximus, it was found in a few days, that he too had yielded to their persuasions, and become "obedient to the faith." And then, all three refusing to join in the sacrifice to

Jupiter, were put to death, and together received the crown of martyrdom.

Cecilia, having washed the bodies with her tears, and wrapped them in her robes, buried them side by side in the cemetery of Calixtus. But her own hour was drawing nigh. Once more she was summoned before the Prefect, and ordered to sacrifice, under penalty of horrible tortures. But she only smiled in scorn; while those who stood by, moved to pity by the fate which seemed impending over one so young and beautiful, entreated her to yield. But still she refused, until affected, by the mute eloquence of her steadfastness, more than forty persons were touched in their hearts, declaring themselves Christians, and ready to die with her. Then Almachius, filled with rage, exclaimed, "What art thou, woman?" and with something of the old spirit of her nation, she replied, "I am a Roman of noble race." "I ask," said he, "of thy religion?" and she said, "Thou blind one, thou art already answered!" More and more enraged, the Prefect commanded that they should convey her back to her own house, and filling the bath with boiling water, cast her into it. But the age of miracles was not yet passed, and as the three Hebrew captives came forth safe from the flames of the burning furnace, and as —a legend tells us—St. John was preserved in the caldron of boiling oil, so Cecilia was unharmed by her fiery trial. Then Almachius sent an executioner to put her to death with the sword. But his hand trembled, and after giving her three wounds on the neck and breast, he went his way, leaving her bleeding and half dead. And so she lived on for three days, spending her time in prayer and exhortation to the converts, and distributing to the poor all that she possessed. In her last moments she sent for St. Urban, and desired that the house in which she then lay dying, should be converted into a place of worship for the Christians. Then, full of faith and charity, and

singing with her sweet voice praises and hymns to the last moment, she passed away to her reward. The Christians embalmed her body, and she was buried by St. Urban in the same cemetery with her husband.

IV.

The last request of St. Cecilia was complied with, the house in which she suffered was consecrated as a church, and the chamber of her martyrdom was regarded as a spot of peculiar sanctity.

> "Her hous the cherche of Seinte Cecile hight,
> Seint Urban halowed it, as he wel might,
> In which unto this day in noble wise
> Men don to Crist and to his seinte servise."*

But troubles gathered about the Empire — the barbarians of the North became masters of the city — and this ancient church fell into ruin. In the ninth century, however, it was rebuilt by Pope Paschal I. Tradition tells us, that while engaged in this work, he had a dream, in which St. Cecilia appeared to him, and revealed the spot in which she lay buried. Search was accordingly made in the cemetery of Calixtus, and there her body was found still undecayed, wrapt in a shroud of gold tissue, and round her feet a linen cloth dipped in her blood. Near her were the remains of Valerian, Tiburtius and Maximus, which, together with hers, were deposited in the same church,

* Chaucer.

now St. Cecilia-in-Trastevere. There, they still show the little room, containing her bath, in which she was martyred. It is now used as a Chapel, and though the frescoes with which it was decorated are in a state of ruin from age and damp, yet the machinery for heating the bath, the pipes, and stoves, yet remain.

In the year 1599, when the church had again fallen into ruin, it was restored by Cardinal Sfondrati, and sumptuously embellished in the taste of the sixteenth century. The sarcophagus containing the body of St. Cecilia was opened with great solemnity in the presence of several cardinals and dignitaries of the church. Among them was Cardinal Baronius, who has left us this description of the body buried by Pope Paschal, when exhumed. "She was lying within a coffin of cypress wood, inclosed in a marble sarcophagus; not in the manner of one dead and buried, that is, on her back, but on her right side, as one asleep, and in a very modest attitude; covered with a simple stuff of taffety, having her head bound with cloth, and at her feet the remains of the cloth of gold and silk which Pope Paschal had found in her tomb. By order of Clement VIII. the relics remained untouched and inviolate; the cypress coffin was inclosed in a silver shrine and replaced under the altar. The re-interment was made a solemn day of festival. It took place with great pomp in the presence of the pope and clergy, while crowds from the neighboring towns assisted at the ceremony."*

Among those present on that occasion was Stefano Maderno, then in the employment of Cardinal Sfondrati as sculptor and architect. By his order he executed the celebrated statue of "St. Cecilia lying dead," to commemorate the attitude in which she was found. And there the statue can be seen to this day, one of the most expressive

* Mrs. Jameson's "*Sacred and Legendary Art*," vol. ii. p. 206.

and beautiful sculptures which the seventeenth century produced. It is the figure of a female reclining on her side, perfect in form, the hands crossed at the wrists, the drapery beautifully modelled, the head enveloped in linen, while a golden circle round the neck conceals the place of the wound. And thus art has lent its aid, to express the feelings of devotion, and to perpetuate one of the most beautiful legends of the ancient Church.

——— "Thy glorious lif and passion,
Thou with thy gerland, wrought of rose and lilie,
Thee mene I, maid and martir, Seinte Cecilie."

MARTHA, THE SISTER OF MARY.

BY THE REV. J. V. VAN INGEN, D. D.

"One thing is needful."

WHATEVER world lies open to us, whatever object great or small invites attention, we can see in it no more than we bring eyes to see. What does the reader see in our illustration of Martha with her cross and attendant monster?* The story of Martha, interwoven wonderfully with the mysteries of Christian faith, is like all Scripture story, simple but suggestive, giving a type of characteristic qualities and dispositions: and this, set out with that distinct certainty which attends unerring truth and wisdom. The artist muses over such realities. He approaches with reverence even the outer courts of these fine moral facts; and draws near to their inner shrine with a deepening awe. His prayer — meanwhile — that eyes may be given him to see their inner spirit, capacity to feel its inspiration, and power to portray it on the canvas, or to infuse its mysterious essence into song. What bliss to him — what blessing to mankind — if he succeed.

* "Marthe. (Evangile.) Tous les peintres la représentent domptante un monstre — domptante un dragon."

The gospel record of the family at Bethany, reputed by tradition to have been one of rank and wealth, is too familiar to require repetition here. The home of "Mary, and her sister, and Lazarus," was but at the distance of an easy walk from the Holy City. It kept open to the blessed Jesus, at all times, its hospitable shelter. The gloom and empire of the grave even, were broken and dispelled for its solace, and a brother restored to it who seems to have been father and all to its female inmates. But deadly care and the delusive "pride of life" did not scruple to enter or to abide in it, even along with THE TRUTH and THE LIFE itself; the very "one thing needful:" while the sequel shows how effectually, by the cross and the dove, this spirit was dethroned and subdued to serve. Hence, Martha, "cumbered once about much serving," even to the neglect of her guest's society, is by that Divine Guest transformed; and can gladly leave home and all to indulge, by the cross or at the sepulchre, the love she once chid in Mary.

Has the painter discerned the essence of these facts? the law that governs them? Is it converted, sanctified, CHRISTIAN Martha, that we see in our illustration? Once careful and troubled about many things; her mind, her heart, preoccupied and filled with earth and earthly things, her choice divided, her aims distracting. Does she now show us the power of Christian faith and hope, joyful and fearless, leavening the lump of worldly care? — The mystery of living in the world, yet above it: using this world, and not allowing it at all to master us. The triumph over circumstances. The secret of heaven upon earth. The keen, sad discernment of the monster, in spite of the fascination of the eye of mischief. The cross taming the dragon. Worldly duties and employments, and still more worldly pleasures, forced or charmed into subservience to heavenly aims: the monster made obsequious, and the business of earthly life won over, by a

divine skill, to minister in the train, and to wear the livery, of heaven-derived and heaven-aspiring piety.

"My citizenship is in heaven." Thus we may deem she speaks — "By the cross to the skies." "Excelsior!" The painter has succeeded. One thing is needful. Martha has chosen the good part. The essence of the story animates the painting, to instruct, to admonish, and to charm.

"One thing is needful." "Careful and troubled about many things." "Mary hath chosen that good part which shall never be taken from her." That "good part," what is it? And those "many things," to what end serve they? Let us go to the great, wise poverty of the sage and honored Hooker for our answer, and meditate his oracular response: "The happiness of mankind is in God and the law of God."

"We labor to eat, and we eat to live, and we live to do good, and the good which we do, is as seed sown with reference unto a future harvest: but we must come at length to some pause. For if every thing were to be desired for some other, without any stint, there could be no certain end proposed unto our actions, we should go on we know not whither."

"Now that which man doth desire with reference to a farther end, the same he desireth in such measure as is unto that end convenient; but what he coveteth as good in itself, towards that his desire is ever infinite. So that unless the last good of all, which is desired altogether for itself, be also infinite, we do evil in making it our end; even as they who placed their felicity in wealth, or honor, or pleasure, or any thing here attained, because in desiring any thing as our final perfection, which is not so, we do amiss. Nothing may be infinitely desired, but that good which is indeed infinite; for the better, the more desirable; that therefore is most desirable wherein there is

infinity of goodness; so that if any thing desirable may be infinite, that must needs be the highest of all things that are desired. No good is infinite, but only God; therefore He is our felicity and bliss. Moreover, desire tendeth unto union with that it desireth: if then in Him we be blessed, it is by force of participation and conjunction with Him. Again, it is not the possession of any good thing, can make them happy which have it, unless they enjoy the things wherewith they are possessed. Then are we happy therefore, when fully we enjoy God as an object wherein the powers of our souls are satisfied even with everlasting delight. So that although we be men, yet by being unto God united, we live as it were the life of God. Happiness therefore is that estate whereby we attain, so far as possibly may be attained, the full possession of that which simply for itself is to be desired; and containeth in it, after an eminent sort, the contentation of our desires, the highest degree of all our perfection."

Well weighed, and, to the thoughtful mind, most lucid words.

God is then that to which the cross upheld by Martha points us as the "final end." Toward THIS, if we have chosen or would choose "that good part," must every other tend. But each tendeth thither by and through some other, as its mean or antecedent. To understand this order and enthrone its principle in life and act, is the wisdom that discerns the "one thing needful." No other thing is needful, except it tend, and so far as it tend, by way of mean, to bring us nearer to that "one thing."

Why did the retreat, the charmed retreat at Bethany, attract so often the divine footsteps of Jesus; THE GUEST, THE FRIEND? — Was it the cheer? Martha careful and troubled on that account offends Him; while Mary wins approval — "that good part" — in words exhaling still, in the very utterance, fragrance above that of her own ointment "very precious." "Jesus loved Mary, and her sister, and

Lazarus." The cheer had testified a welcome, and the welcomed friend found the welcomer feasting on the privilege of His society; — sitting at His feet, hearing His words. The cheer, even such as she had, — profuse or frugal, — the cheer was needful, but only to an end above itself. That end was all in all: it was society, love, communion.

Such, then, is hospitality, and skill in entertainment. It is a lure for the intercourse of real friendship; — it is a venture made in the hope and longing to converse and to commune with "angels unawares." It is a sacrament of charity and conjunct life.

What mysteries of the "glory to be revealed," are entwined and blended with the memorial of the hospitalities of this one family alone. How the monsters of ostentatious profusion, of vain rivalry, and extravagant display, cower and yield abashed at the reproofs of the greatest of all guests. While the cross in the hand of once troubled Martha, and lifted above the mean level of her former "care," symbolizes how wisely goods not alone, but life, may be "not counted dear to itself," so only that pure desires may feed upon their object, and we may sit down with Mary. How the heart of that family grew and warmed with life and love not only, by its hospitalities, but became knit thereby to the life of God, and the eternal home of glory.

But the cross hallowed all. And many a dragon, fascinating but dreadful, of vanity or distrust, of jealous rivalry, or envy, or heart-engrossing care, must yield in conflict with it, ere this end be either found or sought by beings so prone as we are to be careful and troubled about many things.

How quickly, though with a princely courtesy and bounty, were the cares of entertainment, to his three stranger guests, despatched by Abraham, at his tent door, under the oak of Mamre. And what a sequel to an entertainment! What converse!

But I must pause; and hint only of the entertainment at Emmaus:

for in this cluster of worthies, our saint and this attempt to learn wisdom from her story, have but a share proportionate. Else there were gain in saying how, to the young, the charm of science and philosophy—of arts, great and small,—innocent in themselves,—may prove the fascination of the monster's eye, just by preoccupation of the time and faculties; until they become the goal of the Christian maiden's affection and ambition, and the praise and joy they bring, the end and not a way thereto. And thus (is it not common?) by neglect of the blessed arts and ways of piety in secret and in public, she come to forget the near presence of her God and Saviour, and chide the sister as unkind or quite beside herself, who loves to sit always at His feet. And so of skill and thrift in youth or maiden,—these may reverse completely the divine order,—and, parents even approving,—they may live to eat, and eat to grow strong for worldly work, and work for gold and die of care; the one thing needful hidden from eyes perverted, and so lost for ever.

Yes, and the cross, that should remind us of its failure to detain the Lord we love on earth,—worn as a witness that we know His story,—a fitting monitor that He calls us *by it* to HIMSELF,—the very cross may be degraded to rank only with the vain "earthly things" that fill His place. To keep out care the SPIRIT must come in,—wooed often in contemplation and in prayer: He who "takes of what is Christ's and showeth unto us."

"The Dove must settle on the Cross,
Else we should all sin on or sleep
With Christ in sight, turning our gain to loss."

"Nay, blessed Spirit! but by Thee
The Church's prayer finds wings to soar,
The Church's hope finds eyes to see."

Thus do I end my night's converse with thee, sainted hostess of my incarnate God and Saviour, and with thy cross and menial monster. Only may room be made when I have done, for what I would fain subjoin as a fit ending, a prayer most suited to my theme from the private records of a Christian lady and scholar, seeking in all and by all GOD AND THE LAW OF GOD.

PRAYER. FROM THE PAPERS OF LADY PAKINGTON.

Lord, I beseech Thee to incline my soul to do and suffer Thy will, whatsoever it is, with that readiness, and courage, and cheerfulness here, with which they that do continually behold Thy face do always execute Thy commands delivered in heaven. For the time that it shall be Thy will that I attend Thy service here below, Lord, show me the way that I should walk in, that I may not live unprofitably before Thee. Be Thou pleased to employ me as Thy servant, though most unworthy that honor, to bring in some glory to Thy name, some estimation to Thy holy faith whereunto I am called, some advantage to others, especially to those who are near unto me, some improvement in their spiritual eternal state, some fruit to my account, some ground of comfort and rejoicing to my own soul.

Lord, carry me safe, and unmoved, and undefiled, through all the unquiet billows and defilements of this life; and in all the exercises of my vigilancy, patience, and constancy, do Thou continue to watch over me: not to permit me to fall off from them in any part through the deceitfulness of sin, the repeated importunity of the tempter, the empty terrors, or the allurements of the world, or the sloth and treachery of my own soul. Lord, it is thy restraining grace from which I acknowledge to have received all the degrees of innocence; Thy preventing and assisting, from which I have derived all the strength unto victory over my sin: and be Thou pleased to continue these securities of Thine to me every hour and minute of my life, that under the shadow of Thy wings I may rejoice, that by this armor of Thine I may have truce or victory over all my ghostly enemies.

And then, Lord, for viands of this short travail of mine, for the remainder of it, give me a heart to be satisfied and rejoice in my portion, be it the meanest that Thy wisdom, on the sight of my infirmities, shall see fittest to choose for me. And how long or how short space soever Thou shalt be pleased to continue me here, be pleased also to continue my thirst of Thee;

which, without forsaking my station, may anticipate the comfort and joy of beholding Thee; that, seeking and savoring of the things above, I may have my fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

And so farewell, till Christmas, Martha, and take with thee thy dragon and mine also. Come then, once more, with thy sisters,† and bring to us still thy cross, wreathed by evergreen myrtle and shining holly, — and if thou must still be attended by Care incarnate, be sure he comes exorcised, tamed and fit for Christian service. Thou camest to us, unlooked for, with the last days of summer, and at a season of too anxious cares of business and of office; importuning gently for attention, and the meditation of thy pictured story. Importuning in vain, until sorrow lighted again her lamp within our dwelling, and sleep and our own obtrusive dragons shrank away together, unwilling or unable to share such vigils. Turning then to converse with thee, we have proved it pleasant converse. The dying gentle moans of our little boy seem to echo (while we watch where death has suddenly laid him) your monition, — "One thing is needful!" and the tear of bereavement seals our record of its truth. The empty cross that could not retain its Victim, tells, the while, how anguish too has its triumphs!

Yes! — converted, sanctified, Christian Martha, — thou art gone — "Excelsior" — by the cross to the skies! By grace we will follow thee. One thing is needful! That good part.

ROCHESTER, W. N. Y., *Sept.*, 1851. J. V.

* "*Art of Contentment.*" By LADY PAKINGTON. *Preface.* See Note on p. 35.

† "Illustrious Women of Early Christianity."

It seems proper, in connection with what has just been given by Dr. Van Ingen, to quote the legendary accounts respecting Martha, especially as the engraving requires something of the kind to illustrate its peculiarities. Mrs. Jameson's version of the legend is as follows :—

"According to the Provencal legend, while Mary Magdalene converted the people of Marseilles, Martha preached to the people of Aix and its vicinity. In those days the country was ravaged by a fearful dragon called the *Tarasque*, which during the day lay concealed in the river Rhone. Martha overcame this monster by sprinkling him with holy water, and having bound him with her girdle (or, as others say, her garter), the people speedily put an end to him. The scene of this legend is now the city of *Tarascon*, where there is, or was, a magnificent church, dedicated to St. Martha, and richly endowed by Louis XI.

"The same legends assure us that St. Martha was the first who founded a monastery for women; the first after the blessed Mother of Christ, who vowed her virginity to God; and that when she had passed many years in prayer and good works, feeling that her end was near, she desired to be carried to a spot where she could see the glorious sun in heaven, and that they should read to her the history of the passion of Christ; and when they came to the words, 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit,' she died."* J. A. S.

NOTE. — DOROTHY, LADY PAKINGTON.

It is well known that the house of Sir John Pakington, Bart., Westwood, in the county of Worcester, was a place of refuge in the time of Cromwell's usurpation to many eminent sufferers of the King's party, and especially to that pattern of Christian constancy and primitive zeal for the truth, Dr. Henry Hammond, whose life and writings remain for the instruction of all ages that have come after. Here that great and good man was cherished for the last ten years of his life by the worthy owner of the mansion and his pious lady; and here, just before the restoration of the royal family, according to his own heart's prayer, he peacefully resigned his soul to his Maker, April 25, 1660.

* Mrs. Jameson's "*Sacred and Legendary Art*," p. 225.

It was known at the first appearance of these treatises, that the author was a friend of Hammond; and this is almost the only fact concerning the author, which can be said to have been certainly known. Lady Pakington's warm regard for her distinguished guest was such as to give her the best of all possible titles to be called his friend; it is instanced in other particulars mentioned in Bishop Fell's *Life of Hammond*, and more especially by the following impressive and affecting anecdote:

"There was one Houseman, a weaver by trade, but by weakness disabled too much to follow that or any other employment, who was an extreme favorite of Dr. Hammond's. Him he used with a most affectionate freedom, gave him several of his books, and examined his progress in them, invited him, nay, importuned him still, to come for whatever he needed, and at his death left him ten pounds as a legacy.

"A little time before his death, he and the Lady Pakington being walking, Houseman happened to come by; to whom, after the Doctor had talked awhile in his usual friendly manner, he let him pass; yet soon after called him back with these words: 'Houseman, if it should please God that I should be taken from this place, let me make a bargain between my lady and you, that you be sure to come to her with the same freedom you would to me for any thing you want.' And so with a most tender kindness gave him his benediction. Then turning to the lady, he said, 'Will you not think it strange I should be more affected at parting from Houseman than from you?'"

It cannot be surprising that one whose Christian benevolence and discernment were thus appreciated by Hammond, should have been, as Fell relates of her, a person who delighted much in the attractive discourses of her guest, and who could imbibe their spirit. It has long been handed down and confidently received as a family tradition, and there is a small apartment in the top of the house at Westwood, which has always been pointed out as the room in which Lady Pakington, with the assistance of Dr. Hammond and Bishop Fell, arranged that excellent work, *The Whole Duty of Man*.

Lady Pakington was the daughter of Thomas, Lord Coventry, keeper of the great seal of England for the first sixteen years of the reign of Charles I., a man, as Clarendon testifies, of great abilities and the strictest integrity, whose death, in 1640, at the beginning of the Long Parliament, was looked upon as a singular misfortune to the King's cause. She was married to Sir John Pakington, a loyal and upright adherent to the same party, who, after the loss of £40,000 expended in defence of his sovereign, and having been tried for his life under the government of the usurper, lived to be returned member of parliament for his native county of Worcester in the first parliament which assembled upon the restoration. The attachment of

Sir John Pakington to the suffering Church had been well proved in the days of her trial; as it appears that a friendly correspondence was constantly kept up between the house at Westwood and the loyal divines who were numbered among Hammond's friends, particularly Fell, Allestree, and the good and learned Bishop Sanderson; and his joy, when the Church and Episcopacy were restored, is strongly marked in the annals of the time. When Dr. George Morley, the newly-appointed Bishop of Worcester, came in September, 1661, to take possession of his see, "the noble and loyal gentleman" rode out to meet him two miles from the city, at the head of "his gallant troop of volunteers," and so escorted him onwards till he was joined nearer Worcester by the Lord Lieutenant and a number of other loyalists, of the magistracy, gentry, and clergy of Worcestershire. Lady Pakington appears to have lived many years in happy union with her husband; and dying in 1679, was buried near the grave of her friend Dr. Hammond, in the church of Hampton Lovel, the parish-church of Westwood.

PETRONILLA.

BY THE EDITOR.

It is no unnatural or unlawful curiosity to desire to know something respecting the domestic affairs of the apostles of our Lord. Every reader of Holy Scripture has, we doubt not, often mused upon topics about which we have no information derived either from the Word of God or from contemporaneous authority. Not only the habits, customs, manners, individual peculiarities, and such like, of those holy men, are matters of which we should be glad to know something, but also their every-day, home life is that in which we should take a special interest. St. Peter, we know, had a wife, and may have had children; before he was called to follow our Lord he had a home, and as a pious Jew lived in the discharge of his daily duty as a fisherman, and in the enjoyment of those privileges of grace which "Moses and the prophets" afforded all who heard their divine teachings. From what the Gospels tell us of his natural temperament previous to his being called to be an apostle, we can readily imagine him to have been full of warmth and zeal, but somewhat stern and disposed to impetuosity, especially in matters of religion.

His home may have been blessed with "children and the fruit of the womb," those precious gifts of God's goodness; and his heart may

have been gladdened with joy and pride while they remained on the earth, and bowed down with affliction and unutterable grief when it pleased God, in His inscrutable wisdom, to remove them: or it may be that in his house was never heard the plaintive and touching cry of infancy, the gladsome notes of youth, or the inspiring voices of early manhood and maturity. We cannot tell, for we know nothing certainly on the subject; but we can imagine what a father he must have been; how ardent his affection, how earnest his care, how devoted his zeal to train them up in the way in which they should go.

Did he have sons? he set before them the glorious history of their ancestors from Joshua, the captain of the Lord, downward; he taught them to look, and see, and know, that Jehovah, while He punished the rebellion of His people, was always willing to listen to the supplicating cry of penitence and submission; his own glowing spirit led him to meditate upon the hour of retribution when by God's mercy and help they might throw off the hated Roman yoke, and under the guidance of an inspired leader might once more assert their independence; his sincere (though probably not very enlightened) piety induced him to point his children to the earnest expectation which at that time pervaded all classes of the near approach of the Messiah, the Prince and Prophet of His people, the Anointed One of God, under whose guidance they should tread down their enemies and triumph over the heathen.

Did he have daughters? his fatherly heart swelled with exultation as he spoke to them of Sarah and Rebecca, and Rachel, and Ruth, and Hannah, and Esther, and Judith, and the mother of the Maccabees, and countless others in the glorious lineage of Jewish maidens; he told them, in earnest tone and with paternal pride, what the mothers in Israel had always been; how patient, and faithful, and noble-hearted they had ever proved; how in the day of trial they

had never quailed, in the day of triumph their voices had always been heard chanting songs of victory and praise to the God of armies; how they had nurtured their children for Jehovah's service; how they had often stood and nobly breasted the flood of desolation and ruin; how wise, and prudent, and devoted they had always shown themselves; how God had blessed His people more than once for their sakes; yea, and how of a woman of Israel He, to whom the gathering of the people should be, was to spring.

But why need we thus run on with imaginings as to what so great and good a man as St. Peter was would have done, had he been blessed with children, and had they been spared to grow up and take their place among the men and women of the apostolic days? We dare not assume that he had son or daughter, neither do we feel at liberty to say that we believe that he was so highly favored; and yet it is worth noting that a writer not very much more than a century after St. Peter's martyrdom, speaks of the great Apostle to the circumcision as one of those who was married and had children. Our readers, we think, will not be uninterested in a short review of the opinion expressed by Clement of Alexandria on this point.

Clement may not inaptly be termed a Christian Eclectic, and he took occasion to compose a work properly entitled *Stromata*,* in which he gives us his views on various matters connected with Christian doctrine and practice. In the third book of the Stromata he is discussing (among other things) the question whether in reality it be a higher degree of spiritual advancement to live a celibate life, or to put away one's wife for this end, or to refrain from marrying a second time. Did not the ancient righteous men, is his inquiry, the patriarchs and prophets of old, partake with thankfulness of creature enjoyments? yet it pleased some of them to live continently, even though married

* Στρωματεῖς, *patch-work*, such as the coverlets of beds were often made of.

and having reared up children; but here, he goes on to say, St. Paul's rule operates, "let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth; for God hath received him." (Rom. xiv. 3.) Moreover, too, our Lord says of Himself, "John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." (Matt. xi. 18, 19.) Now (is Clement's argument), do they who take away the liberty allowed by the Lord to His people, deeming a single life more pure and better suited to advances in holiness than a married condition, bear in mind the facts of the case? and "do they," we use the author's own words, "censure even the apostles? *Why, Peter and Philip begat children.* Philip, too, gave his daughters in marriage to husbands; and Paul indeed was not afraid in a certain epistle to speak of his wife (*σύζυγον*), whom he did not lead about with him, because he had no need of her presence in his great work." And he then goes on to quote the epistle to the Philippians, and says that the wives of the apostles went with their husbands, in most cases, as sisters in Christ, and were thus enabled to speak of the truth among females, in the harem (*γυναικωνίτης*), to whom the apostles, from the peculiar social arrangements of that day, could not be admitted.*

Thus much may suffice as to Clement's views on the question of St. Peter's being the father of a family or not; whether our readers adopt one view or the other does not seem to be very material; but they must, we think, be struck with the fact that this early father, and writer in defence of Gospel truth, had none of the later notions on the subject of priests being married, and would have been horrified at the

* Clementis Alexandrini *Opera*, pp. 447, 448.—Lutetiæ, 1629.

attempt to *force* the clergy to be celibates, as the Romish Church has done to the great scandal and injury of religion and morals. We do not wish to lay more stress upon Clement's statement than it will fairly bear; still, we hope that, seeing something can be said in favor of St. Peter's having had a family, the legend or tradition — for it is confessedly only such — which we are about to relate concerning a daughter of his, will not be deemed wholly without foundation because it has not the firm basis of historic testimony in its support. We give the story much as we find it told in the books on such topics, without pretending to solve the difficulties of a chronological kind which are connected with it.

Petronilla — thus the legend runs — was the daughter of St. Peter. Born at a period when her parents were past middle age, she was peculiarly dear to them, and as she was their only daughter, if not their only child, they lavished upon her the choicest gifts of fond parents' love and joy. Fair as the fairest of the daughters of her country, and full of the winning graces of youth and beauty, she was equally a source of pride and gratulation and of anxious foreboding to her father and mother. They had nurtured her up in the true faith of the Lord Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah of God; they had shielded her from every harm, kept off every danger, and watched with the tenderest interest the daily progress toward maturity of a high souled, noble spirited girl, as she drew nearer and nearer the time when her own trial should come upon her, and when, perhaps, she should be compelled to bear up alone, without father or mother, against the cruel mockings and insults of ungodly persecutors of the faithful in Christ. St. Peter knew well that at any hour he might be called to lay down his life for the Master's sake, and then, what would be the lot of his lovely and unprotected daughter? and he was the more deeply impressed with the conviction that his own time of trial

drew nigh, because only a little while before he suffered as a martyr for the truth, his wife had attained the crown of martyrdom and passed to her joyful account. Persecution, as all know, spared neither age nor sex, and we can well understand how the aged apostle foresaw clearly that Petronilla, so far from being likely to be exempt from the fierce assaults of furious bigotry and brutal lust, was all the more certain to be subjected to trial of her constancy in the faith. Would she be enabled to come off conqueror in the fight of afflictions? this was the question which wrung the father's heart with anguish, and bowed his very soul to the dust with apprehension.

Petronilla — the story goes on to say — accompanied her father in his journey from the East. While they were at Rome she fell sick of a grievous infirmity which deprived her of the use of her limbs. And it happened that as the disciples were at meat with him in his house, one said to him, "Master, how is it that thou who healest the infirmities of others, dost not heal thy daughter Petronilla?" And St. Peter answered, "It is good for her to be sick; it is for her profit in spiritual things that she lies thus afflicted;" but that they might see the power that was in the Word of God, he commanded her to get up and serve them at table, which she did to their great marvel and astonishment; and having done so she lay down again helpless as before. Many years afterwards, however, being perfected by her long-suffering, and praying fervently, she was healed; but whether this occurred before or after her father's martyrdom, the legend does not state; though it is most likely that it was subsequent to that event.

The daughter of St. Peter, as we have before stated, was wonderfully fair; and it chanced that Valerius Flaccus, a young and noble Roman, who was unhappily a heathen and despised the claims of the gospel, became enamored of her beauty, and sought her for his wife. He was a person of too much power and consequence to make it safe

to refuse absolutely submission to his will; the only favor that she could obtain was the privilege of having three days wholly to herself, in which to deliberate upon Flaccus's proposition; at the end of that time he was to return, and she was forced to consent that then he might lead her away to his own home. She passed the whole of the time in fasting and supplication, praying earnestly to be delivered from this great peril; she received the sacrament of the Lord's Supper at the hand of Nicomedes the priest, and commending herself to God's mercy and protection, awaited in humble hope and confidence the result. Flaccus came with great pomp, and doubting nothing but that he should now obtain her for his wife; but when they entered the room where they hoped to find the maiden, behold she had fallen asleep in Jesus, and was not. The company of nobles who had attended Flaccus, carried her to the grave, in which they laid her, crowned with roses; and he who had expected to take home with him a lovely bride, mourning and lamenting greatly, returned (as we may hope) a sadder and a better man.

Such is the legend of Petronilla, a legend not without its interest, and yet, unlike most of similar legends, never very popular as a subject of art; it seems to have been unknown to the earlier artists, or neglected by them as not sufficiently striking for their purpose. Mrs. Jameson, in her "Sacred and Legendary Art," speaks of only two or three instances in which this legend has formed the subject of the painter's skill and creative power; one of these we quote. "The scene of Petronilla's entombment is the subject of a once celebrated and colossal picture by Guercino; the copy in Mosaic is over the altar, dedicated to her, in St. Peter's; in front, and in the lower part of the picture, she is just seen as they are letting her down into the grave, crowned with roses; behind stands Flaccus with a handkerchief in his hand, and a crowd of spectators; in the upper part of the picture

Petronilla is already in paradise, kneeling, in a rich dress, before the feet of Christ, having exchanged an earthly for a heavenly bridegroom. This great picture exhibits, in a surpassing degree, the merits and defects of Guercino; it is effective, dramatic, deeply and forcibly colored, and arrests attention; on the other hand, it is coarse, crowded, vulgar in sentiment, and repugnant to our better taste."

In concluding this attempt to illustrate one of the thousand traditionary stories of early days, we hope that the reader will allow us to extract two or three passages from writers of note, and in this way permit us to clear our skirts of even a suspicion that we would, in the slightest degree, confound the distinction between historic truth and mere legendary lore. We have too deep a reverence for what is true to do that, and desirable as it might seem to place confidence in the legends and traditions, which popish collections set forth respecting saints, and martyrs, and holy women in other days, we have not the remotest inclination to speak of them in any other way than as legends and traditions, which may, certainly, have some truth connected with them, but are quite as likely to be wholly the product of some monkish story-teller's brains in the middle ages. But, to our extracts.

Dr. Cave, in his "Life of St. Peter," mentions the tradition that Petronilla's mother was the daughter of Aristobulus, brother to Barnabas the Apostle; and, alluding to Jerome's notion that St. Peter, when he left all and followed Christ, abandoned his wife also, he is not disposed to give much weight to that Father's opinion, because of some idiosyncrasies of his on the subject of marriage and single life. "The best is," says the Doctor, "we have an infallible authority who plainly intimates the contrary, the testimony of St. Paul, who tells us of Cephas, that 'he led about a wife, a sister,' along with him, who for the most part mutually cohabited and lived together, for aught

that can be proved to the contrary.* Clemens Alexandrinus gives us this account, though he tells us not the time or place, that Peter, seeing his wife going towards martyrdom, exceedingly rejoiced that she was now returning home; encouraging, and earnestly exhorting her, and calling her by name, bade her be mindful of our Lord. Such, says he, was the wedlock of that blessed couple, and the perfect disposition and agreement in those things that were dearest to them. By her he is said to have had a daughter, called Petronilla, (Metaphrastes adds a son) how truly I know not. This only is certain, that Clemens of Alexandria reckons Peter for one of the apostles that was married and had children. And surely, he who was so good a man, and so good an apostle, was as good in the relation both of a husband and a father." †

Dr. Giles, the learned editor of the "Anglo-Saxon Chronicle," after quoting Ingram, who stoutly maintains that Petronilla's history is worthy of entire credit, and not at all a Romish legend of modern growth, says, rather pointedly; "and yet the reader, who shall receive even the existence of Petronilla in any other light than as a fable, must possess a credulity which will enable him to realize all the impostures with which ecclesiastical history abounds." ‡

* Cardinal Baronius, (*Annales Ecclesiastici*, sub an. 69), says, that there is a tradition of St. Peter's having had a daughter; but, while he does not like to reject the story altogether, he takes particular pains to give us his opinion, that this was before St. Peter was called to the Apostleship; and, moreover, that all the married apostles, as a matter of course, put away their wives, and lived continent from the time that they were called by our Lord. The good cardinal, naturally enough, is quite scandalized at the idea of the "prince of the Apostles," and the first pope, having a daughter born (unlike some others in the papal line) in lawful wedlock; he gravely expresses his doubts, whether Petronilla was his daughter at all; and he gives various learned philological reasons for his doubts on this point. We beg that the reader who cares about the matter at all, will take a look into the Annals for his satisfaction.

† Cave's "*Lives of the Apostles*," vol. i. p. 160.—Lond. 1834.

‡ Bohn's "*Antiquarian Library*," p. 455, note.

Finally, Mrs. Jameson, who has treated the legends of early days so interestingly in her works on the subject, gives the story of Petronilla much as we have done above; but finds it necessary to say, "the legend places her death in the year 98, that is thirty-four years after the death of St. Peter; but it would be in vain to attempt to reconcile the dates and improbabilities of this story."*

And here we take our leave of the pretty story, and wish the reader abundant contentment therewith.

* "*Sacred and Legendary Art*," p. 126.

FLAVIA DOMITILLA.

BY THE EDITOR.

"Celebremus igitur triumphum Dei cum exsultatione, victoriam Domini cum laudibus frequentemus, diurnis nocturnisque precibus celebremus, ut pacem plebi suæ datam confirmet in sæculum."—LACTANTIUS, *De Mortibus Persecutorum*, 52

To us who live in these latter days it cannot but appear singular, that charges of the vilest and most absurd description were made against the Christians in the first two or three centuries.* We, who know what their principles were, how pure, and noble, and elevating to both soul and body, and how exemplary and consistent they were in their lives, are naturally astonished that they not only should have been accused of crimes of a revolting character, but should have been called upon again and again to suffer unto death on the false and detestable charge of *atheism*. At first, one is almost disposed to doubt the evidence of history that such was the case; for it does not seem hardly possible that any sensible person who took the trouble for a moment

* According to Athenagoras, who wrote a learned *Apology for the Christians*, addressed to the emperor M. Aurelius and his son Commodus, the heathen brought three principal accusations against the Christians — atheism, banqueting on the bodies of children, and incest. — ATHENAG. *Legatio pro Christianis*, p. 4, Colon. 1686.

to learn what a Christian was, or what he believed and how he lived, could have been guilty of such bigoted ignorance and cruelty as we know was common in those days of trial; and yet a little reflection will show that this was just the treatment which the Gospel and the followers of Christ might be expected to meet with at the hands of the miserably blinded heathen of the first ages of the Church. For who were they to whom the good news of salvation was carried by apostles and evangelists? The licentious Greek, and the haughty, conceited Roman. These knew nothing of the future, they cared for nothing but the present; they loved pleasure, they sought for gratification; they gave full rein to their evil passions; they stuck at nothing to gratify their lustful propensities. The people bowed down to stocks and stones, and were the hopeless, but not unwilling, victims of the most awfully corrupt and foul rites and ceremonies; the better educated, while they made no open opposition to the popular religion, sneered at it in fact, and if they had any views at all of what should be their portion after death, thought or hoped that they would perish for ever and sleep an eternal sleep in the grave. Their mythology was filled with myriads of gods and goddesses, whose careers were marked by vile and contemptible acts and principles, and of whom the people thought as of beings like themselves, full of deceit, and treachery, and falsehood, and murder, and lust, and all imaginable crimes. The effect of all this was, on the one hand, where there was any intellectual cultivation, to puff up the mind of the heathen with vain self-conceit and importance in his own eyes, because he saw and felt how puerile, absurd, and preposterous was the popular religion of the day, and how entirely he was left to his own guidance and the metaphysical subtleties of the philosophers and sophists of that period; and on the other hand, to sink the people lower and lower, taking away all appearance of spiritual worship, and setting before them gods many and lords

many, from every nation and region, out of which they might choose whom to serve or fear, and wherein to obey. Most true and full of awful warning is that passage of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, in which he sketches, with a master hand, the deep sinfulness and degradation of the heathen; we shall quote it in full, notwithstanding its length:

"When they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools; and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves: who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections. For even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: who, knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death; not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." (Rom. i. 21–32.)

Such — sad is it to say — was the human race when Christ's gospel was first preached, and to such as these did God, in his infinite mercy and compassion, send the good news of purity and peace in believing. Is it not evident, at once, that they were not in a condition to judge at all fairly, or appreciate rightly, what the Christian religion was, or what were the reasons why the Christians acted as they did? Is it not clear that the pleasure-loving Greek, and the proud, conceited Roman, as well as the thousands of others in other lands, would treat with easy contempt, or haughty scorn and contumely, as unworthy their notice, such a system as the Gospel presents, more especially as it was brought to them by men of no name or note, and claimed absolute, unconditional renunciation of all their gods, and implicit, unhesitating obedience to a crucified Redeemer? Our brethren in the faith refused, just as we should do, to defile themselves with adoration or the slightest marks of respect for the numerous deities of the heathen; they declared that there was but one true God, and Him only they worshipped, the Lord God Almighty, the Eternal Spirit, whom no man hath seen or can see; they had no gorgeous temples, no images, no shrines, no imposing or enticing rites and services, nothing to catch the public gaze or gratify the popular inclination. Pure and simple, but preëminently solemn and effective — in such days as those — were the public services of the Church; prayer to God for all estates of men; prayer to the High and Holy One, inhabiting eternity, for all the mercies and blessings which He so freely bestows, and especially for the redemption of the world by the death and passion of our Saviour Christ; thanksgiving for all His compassionate goodness and love to our race, and particularly towards his Church, the purchase of his own precious death; supplications for the grace of the Holy Ghost, and for guidance into all truth; reading of Holy Scripture; solemn ingrafting into Christ and dedication to his service for ever, in holy baptism, in the

name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; partaking of the consecrated elements of bread and wine in the Lord's Supper, for a continual remembrance of the death and sacrifice of our Redeemer; earnest, simple, but effective preaching and exhorting in Christ's name to repentance and faith, and renunciation of the vanity of the world; — these, and such like, together with the holy, harmless, pure and consistent lives of the Christians, passed the comprehension of Greek, Roman, or barbarian, and almost every where excited only their hatred or derision. They could not understand, and they thought it beneath them to inquire, why the followers of Christ refused utterly to have aught to do with idols and the gods of the heathen; and as the pure and spiritual worship of the Gospel, rendered to Him who is a spirit and must be worshipped in spirit and in truth, seemed to them as no worship at all, they revenged themselves on the Christians by the abominable charge of atheism. In this way began the horrible persecutions to which Christians were early subjected, and by such means did these enemies of the cross gratify their scorn for the truth and their contempt for the professors and practisers of the truth as it is in Jesus. The afflictions which our brethren in Christ were thus called upon to endure, were enough to have broken down the strongest heart. "Every thing that malice or ingenuity could devise was employed to shake their resolution. The rage and insolence of a brutal populace, the scourges and tortures of legal barbarity, and the more subtle torment of promises and entreaties to save their lives by compliance in idolatrous rites, were the portion of innumerable disciples of Christ." Yet, they endured even unto the uttermost, and the patience, the courage, the magnanimity of the noble army of martyrs were most glorious proofs of the power of true faith. "The heathen regarded this steadfastness as obstinacy and insanity. The rejection of all the gods of the heathen, and all their worship, was stigmatized as

atheism and impiety. Abstinence from the vices, the corruptions, and the vile pleasures of the world, was treated as the result of a sour and unsocial temper;" and urged on by pagan priests and ungodly men, who felt how deep a reproach was the Christian's purity upon their sensual, brutish, wicked lives and principles, persecution raged violently, and spared neither age, nor sex, nor station. Our readers will, we doubt not, be interested in the history of one of those holy women of early days, who so admirably illustrates the patience and constancy of the primitive martyrs.

The emperor Vespasian succeeded to the empire the same year that Jerusalem was destroyed. He had an only brother, named Sabinus, a man of unspotted character, and very high reputation in both a military and civil capacity. Vespasian was married to Flavia Domitilla, a lady of rank, who became the mother of Titus and Domitian; Sabinus also left two sons, Flavius Sabinus and Flavius Clemens, both of whom were consuls during the reign of the tyrant Domitian. Sabinus lost his life in an insurrection at Rome, a short time before Vespasian arrived to assume the imperial power. Flavius Clemens espoused the niece of his cousin Domitian, Flavia Domitilla, whose name we hope our readers will hold in honor, because of her courageous maintenance of the true faith, despite the trial to which one of her lofty rank was exposed. After the death of Vespasian, at the advanced age of nearly seventy years, and the very short reign of the noble Titus, Domitian succeeded to the empire, A. D. 81, and the Church, which had had comparative rest for nearly thirty years, was again, towards the close of his reign, called upon to suffer persecution for the faith of Christ. The emperor's eldest cousin, Flavius Sabinus, was put to death by his orders; and as the wretched tyrant spared none who stood in his way, or whom, in the sheer caprice of tyranny, he wished to remove; he determined to slay also his other and only cousin, Flavius Clemens, as well as punish his wife, Flavia Domitilla. Cle-

mens was consul the year before Domitian was assassinated, and at the expiration of his consulship he too, notwithstanding his rank, high character, and near relationship to the emperor, was put to death on the no less absurd than wicked charge of atheism, and adoption of Jewish notions and practices. About the same time M' Acilius Glabrio, who had been consul a few years before, together with a number of others, suffered as martyrs, on the same charge, and their estates were confiscated to the tyrant's use. The wife of Clemens, Flavia Domitilla, was not put to death along with her husband, which would have been kindness in reality, but, by a refinement of cruelty, she was sent into banishment; and, as one writer phrases it, dragged out a long martyrdom in the rocky island of Pontia; subsequently, under the emperor Trajan, she died a martyr for the faith of our Lord and Saviour, whom she constantly worshipped and adored, as the alone true God of our salvation.

But few particulars have been preserved of the life and career of Flavia Domitilla, a circumstance which we cannot but regret on every account, and more especially, because we should much like to know more of one who embraced the pure faith of the Gospel, and maintained her steadfastness in the faith in such an age and under such a tyrant as Domitian, and in the midst of temptations and trials peculiar to her high rank and important social position. We should much like to know under whose instruction it was that she was first led to see and know, that the Gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; and it would indeed form an instructive lesson to be assured of the circumstances under which she grew in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus. Was she privileged, as a young girl, to listen to the great Apostle of the Gentiles? Did she indeed hear the aged St. Peter preach the word of truth in that ancient city where he suffered martyrdom along with his beloved brother Paul? Or was it under the apostolic Clement,

(who was bishop of Rome from about A. D. 90 to A. D. 100) that she was trained in the faith, and taught not to count her life dear unto herself for the love of her Divine Master? We cannot tell, but we should much like to know. We should also esteem it a privilege to have some certain information about those numberless traits of character which render the biography of Christians so interesting and instructive in these latter days. What sort of mind had she? what were her habits of thought? how much of intellectual cultivation had she received? what had she been taught? what were her daily habits? who were her companions and associates? how did she carry herself in the midst of a corrupt and licentious age? how did she demean herself when all, from the highest to the lowest (with rare and noble exceptions), used to revile the faith, sneer at the Christians, and use language, and give utterance to sentiments, equally horrible and disgusting and cruel? Would that we could answer these and such like questions; but we cannot. One thing, however, is very evident, from this as well as other instances on record, that it was not the poor, not the worthless, not the ignoble, not the unimportant alone—as the heathen sneeringly asserted—who joyfully listened to the news of salvation through a Redeemer; for here we have positive proof, that persons of the highest rank and connection in the state not only listened to the Apostles and holy men who preached the Gospel in Rome, but also embraced gladly, and with full conviction, on evidence which no man could gainsay, the offers of hope and peace made to them through Christ; and still more, we have here a manifestation of the power of the Gospel in nerving, not the strong man alone, but even the delicate, refined, tender woman, to endure trial and persecution, even unto death, for the truth's sake.*

* We have not thought it worth while to interrupt our remarks by attending to a difficulty which exists in the accounts given by ancient authors, respecting Flavia Domitilla; it is

We might enlarge upon this topic, and might suggest many useful as well as encouraging considerations to perseverance in the faith, through evil report and good report, in the days in which we live; but we forbear; we shall, however, as well for the reader's edification, as his further instruction, quote a passage or two from authorities well worth examining on subjects like the present, notwithstanding it will be found that they differ in several respects from the narrative which we have given above.

The Roman Church, in her Breviary, has appointed a service for the 12th of May, in commemoration of the martyrdom of St. Flavia Domitilla; one of the *Sectiones* is as follows:

"Flavia Domitilla, virgo Romana, Titi et Domitiani, imperatorum, neptis, cum sacrum virginitatis velamen a beato Clemente Papa accepisset, ab Aureliano sponso, Titi Aurelii consulis filio, delata quod Christiana esset, a Domitiano imperatore in insulam Pontiam est deportata, ubi in carcere longum martyrium duxit. Demum Tarracinam deducta, iterum Christum confessa, cum semper constantior appareret, sub Trajano imperatore, judicis jussu incenso ejus cubiculo, una cum Theodora, et Euphrosyna virginibus, et collectaneis suis, gloriosi martyrii cursum confecit, nonis Maii: quarum corpora integra inventa, a Cæsario diacono sepulta sunt. Hac vero die duorum fratrum ac Domitillæ corporis ex Diaconia sancti Adriani simul translata, in ipsorum martyrum basilicam, tituli Fasciolæ, restituta sunt."*

proper, however, to mention the fact, that some writers style her the *wife* of Clemens, others the *niece*. Not improbably there were two of the same name, one the wife the other the niece of the consul; and some authorities state that the former was banished to the island of Pandataria, the other to the island of Pontia, where she suffered martyrdom. The discrepancy is not very material, it is quite evident, since in the one case we have one martyr suffering for the truth, and in the other, two illustrious women lay down their lives for the faith of Christ.

* Breviarium Romanum, *Pars Verna*, p. 535: Dublin, 1846.

Leaving this passage in the original, as containing some things and expressions that on the whole it is just as well should remain in a dead language, we beg leave to conclude all that need be said about this noble Roman matron in the words of the learned Dr. Cave: he is examining into "those things which were charged upon the Christians, respecting their outward condition;" and after showing how false was the charge that the followers of Christ were only the rude and illiterate, the silly women and children, he proceeds to prove, out of the ancient defenders of Christianity, that men of the highest rank, of the most cultivated intellects, and of the most extensive information, had, in all parts of the Roman empire, embraced the persecuted faith of Christ. That illustrious woman and her husband, of whom we have been speaking heretofore, are among the instances adduced in proof of his assertion.

"Indeed," he says, "it were no hard matter, out of the ancient Histories and Martyrologies of the Church, nay, from the heathen writers themselves, to prove that persons of the highest rank and quality (even in those times) embraced Christianity, and sealed it with their blood. Of which it may suffice to give an account only of some few. Not to insist upon the saints, of which St. Paul tells us were in Nero's palace, we find many considerable persons, and some of them near akin to the emperor, under the reign of Domitian (that cruel prince and persecutor of Christians) entertaining the profession of the Gospel. And first, let us hear the account which Dion Cassius, the famous historian, gives us. He tells us, that about the latter end of Domitian's reign, he condemned many (some whereof were slain, others stripped of their estates), and amongst the rest Flavius Clemens the consul, his own cousin-german, and his wife Flavia Domitilla, near akin also to the emperor, under pretence of atheism, and for that they had embraced the rites and religion of the Jews. His nephew Cle-

mens he put to death, his wife Domitilla he banished into the island of Pandataria. Upon the same account also he put to death Acilius Glabrio, who, together with Trajan, had been consul the year before. That the persons here described were Christians, is plain, partly from the charge of atheism here fastened upon them (the common and familiar accusation, and the title given to Christianity by the heathens, as we observed before), and partly because they are said to have passed over to the rites and customs of the Jews; nothing being more ordinary in the historians of those times, than to mistake Christians for Jews, and to call them so, because both proceeded out of the same country; Christ himself and his apostles being Jews born, and his religion first published and planted there. And that which may give some more countenance to this is, that Suetonius, speaking of Domitian's condemning this Flavius Clemens, represents him as a man *contemptissimæ inertiæ*, as a most contemptibly dull and sluggish person; which we know was generally charged upon the Christians, that they were a useless and unactive people, as we shall have occasion by and by more particularly to remark. Besides this Flavia Domitilla, the wife of Clemens, there was another of the same name, his niece by the sister's side (unless Dion Cassius mistook, and put down wife for niece, which there is no reason to suppose, seeing both may very well consist together), who, as Eusebius informs us, was, with many more, banished by Domitian, in the fifteenth year of his reign, into the island of Pontia, and there put to death for the profession of Christianity, whose persecutions and martyrdoms, says he, are recorded by heathen writers themselves; amongst whom, I suppose, he principally intends Brettius or Brutius, the historian, whom he cites elsewhere, and out of whom he there quotes this very passage; that under Domitian many of the Christians suffered martyrdom, amongst whom was Flavia Domitilla, niece by the sister's side to Flavius Cle-

mens, the consul; who, for being a Christian was banished into the island Pontia. (*Euseb Chron.* p. 208.) She is said, after a great deal of hard and tedious usage, to have been burnt, together with the house wherein she was; her memory is celebrated in the Roman Calendar upon the 7th of May."*

Wherefore, seeing such are the glorious, the undying fruits of faith, let us take courage and go on our way homeward, rejoicing in hope, and patient in tribulation; and let us ask in the words of "the Christian Cicero," with which we began our article:—"Quis ergo non omnibus viribus elaboret, ad tantam claritatem pervenire, ut amicus Dei fiat, ut cum Christo statim gaudeat, ut post tormenta et supplicia terrena præmia divina percipiat? . . . . . Has cogitationes quæ persecutio potest vincere, quæ possunt tormenta superare? . . . . . Quanta est dignitas et quanta securitas, exire hinc lætum, exire inter pressuras et angustias gloriosum, claudere in momento oculos, quibus homines videbantur et mundus, et aperire eosdem statim, ut Deus videatur et Christus!"†

* Cave's "*Primitive Christianity*," Pt. I. chap. 3.

† Lactantius, *De Exhortatione Martyrii*, xiii.

FELICITAS.

BY THE REV. W. B. SPRAGUE, D. D.

The notices of this noble lady that have come down to us are exceedingly brief, but they are of such a character as to make us regret that they could not be expanded into a minute biography. She was a bright star shining in a dark night. She had a glorious mission to perform in her day, and well did she perform it; and after the lapse of seventeen centuries, her influence still lingers in the few noble paragraphs in which her name has been embalmed. From the walks of retired and active benevolence, from the scenes of maternal love and fidelity, as well as from the mingled horrors and triumphs of martyrdom, she speaks to us of the nineteenth century, as really if not as impressively, as she spoke to those who were the actual witnesses of her humble and laborious course, and of its bloody termination.

It was in the second century, and during the reign of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, that this illustrious Roman lady lived and died. She belonged to a family of rank, possessed fine talents, and was educated in all the refinement of her day. But by some means of which we are not informed she was brought in contact with Christianity, and

surrendered both her intellect and her heart to its quickening and regenerating influence. She became an humble and docile follower of the Lord Jesus. And as her lot was cast in the midst of deep moral darkness, she resolved that she would let her light shine. She abounded in works of faith and labors of love. She traversed the streets and lanes of Rome to enlighten ignorance, to supply want, and to comfort sorrow. She regarded her property, her rank, all that she possessed, as so many talents for which she had to render an account; and this idea was evidently always present to her thoughts and feelings with a controlling power. Gayety smiled upon her, but she returned the cold and unsympathizing look. Friendship beckoned her into another path, but she kept firmly and earnestly on her way. Paganism fastened upon her a withering frown, and painted before her to the life the terrors of martyrdom; but there was a spirit within her which shrunk not even at that. She had a family of seven sons; and she had nurtured them all up under the influence of Christian doctrine, and God's Holy Spirit had co-operated with her faithful efforts, in giving to them all a decidedly Christian character. How remarkable is it even at this day, and in a Christian land, to find a family of seven children, especially of seven sons, all of whom give evidence of having had imparted to them the clean heart and the right spirit! How much more remarkable must such an event have been in a pagan country, where there were such numerous and varied and powerful influences concurring to produce an opposite result!

The period referred to was distinguished for public calamities in various parts of the Roman empire. War, famine, pestilence, earthquakes, were severally doing a fearful work; and strange to say, paganism, in its deep wisdom, suspected that Christianity, or rather the votaries of Christianity, were the guilty cause of these calamities. Felicitas quickly became a prominent object of suspicion and disgust, as

she possessed an uncommonly marked Christian character, and withal had a large family who were followers in her footsteps; and in addition to this, her immense wealth was a bait to the avarice of those into whose hands fell the spoils of the martyrs. These two concurring circumstances opened upon her the flood-gates of persecution. Under the inexorable edict that the Christians should sacrifice or die, she was cited before the tribunal of Publius, the prefect of the city, to answer for the crime of being a Christian. At first she was treated with the courtesy and respect due to her rank, in the hope that she might thereby be flattered into submission to the imperial mandate. But she stood as firm as a rock. The prefect next made an appeal to her maternal sensibilities, saying, "If thou hast no regard for thyself, at least have compassion on thy sons, and persuade them to yield to the law." But the noble woman, notwithstanding the mother's heart was beating in her bosom in full and vigorous pulsations, still remained steadfast to her first resolve. Her firm and dignified reply was, that her sons would know how to choose between everlasting life and everlasting death; and in this it turned out that she was not deceived. The prefect then called them one after another, before him, and commanded them to abjure Christ on pain of torments or of death; but their mother, still true to her Saviour and true to her sons, said in a tone of encouragement which went to their hearts, "My children, be strong in heart, and look up to heaven, where Christ and all his servants await your coming; and defy this tyrant boldly; for so shall the King of glory reward you greatly." This was more than the enraged prefect could bear; and he forthwith commanded the executioner to strike her on the mouth and put her to silence; but even this did not keep her from going on with her earnest and encouraging expostulations. Then commenced the work of blood. She saw one son after another, first tortured, and then murdered, while she was

alternately exhorting them to keep up their courage and supplicating her Redeemer to receive their spirits. And when the last had bowed his head to the executioner, and she was permitted to reflect that she had a whole family in heaven, she lifted up her voice in thanksgiving to God that she had been honored, as a Christian mother, to make such a contribution to the world of glory. But the mother herself is still to be disposed of. Who knows but that the heart of the prefect may relent now, and that having looked upon the blood of all her children, her own may yet be spared? No; paganism has no such tender mercies! Then surely she will be permitted to follow at once her martyr children, and not live to have her memory and her heart burdened with the recollections of their dying scene, while yet she knows that her life is prolonged only that her agony may also be protracted. Not even this sad privilege is allowed her — she has a horrible respite from death of four months; but during all this time, the consolations of a divine faith never even grew faint in her bosom. All the time she was rejoicing in the thought that her martyr sons were singing songs of triumph before the throne, and that persecution had no tortures in reserve for herself for which she was not fully prepared. At length her last hour came; and though the emissaries of hell did their worst with her, yet such was the power of her faith that she could look them in the face and smile. The scene of her departure was in one sense too terrible to relate, and in another too glorious to be related. She ascended in the upward track of her glorified children on the twenty-third of November, A. D. 173. Blessed, thrice blessed be the memory of this heroic female martyr!

Numerous are the lessons of truth and wisdom, of warning and encouragement, suggested by this brief but touching story; it may not be out of place to notice a few of them.

I.

How manifestly is Paganism the nurse of superstition! There were disastrous events occurring which were manifestly beyond all human control. And yet it was absurdly concluded that the hand of the Christians was in it all, and that they were able to put even the elements in requisition for carrying out their malignant purposes. They believed this, or at least pretended to believe it, not only without the shadow of evidence, but against the clearest evidence; for besides the absurdity of supposing that nature should bow to any mortal dictation, there was nothing in the character of the Christians to justify the suspicion that they would lend themselves to any purposes of evil; for, like their great Master, they went about doing good.

This and other kindred dreams of Paganism are easily accounted for. Paganism is a perversion of natural religion, and to some extent of revealed religion also; though it loses sight of the one only living and true God, it acknowledges the jurisdiction of superior powers, and has some vague notions concerning retribution. But the small amount of truth which it retains it contrives to obscure and neutralize, by the degrading and monstrous errors which it joins with it; and hence Pagan piety, in some of its manifestations at least, is but another name for superstition. Paganism cannot be so deaf to the voice of nature as not to have some faith in the spiritual, the invisible, the retributive; but on this basis she erects a cumbrous system of hopes and fears and conjectures, alike dishonorable to man's nature, and fatal to all rational enjoyment.

Nor has revelation — not even Christianity — succeeded in effectually casting out the spirit of superstition. What else are the numerous signs of evil that we hear of in the world, from the appearance of a

comet to the fall of a looking-glass, that work such terror in the minds of multitudes; what but evidence that there are practical notions of retribution still prevailing, that are unworthy to find a lodgment in a rational mind. Every one knows what a terrific day Friday is, especially in the maritime calendar. I know an instance of a clergyman who happened to be a solitary passanger on board a ship bound to a port in the Mediterranean; and as he had nothing else to do, he occupied himself in writing sermons. As the passage was an uncommonly protracted one, the captain shrewdly suspected that he owed it to his clerical passenger, and at length impudently told him so to his face, requiring him to desist from an employment which was so manifestly the cause of the head wind and the bad weather; and the clergyman meekly laid aside his pen, while the wind and the weather remained unchanged.

The antidote to these superstitious notions, whether in Pagans or in Christians, is evidently to be found in correct views of the truths of religion, particularly of the Scriptural doctrine of Providence. This brings us to rest in an all perfect God. Here we are assured that the order of the universe is moving on under the direction of infinite wisdom and goodness, and that man has nothing ultimately to fear except from his own sins. Here there is a connection of momentous import between the present and the future revealed to us, while yet no quarter is given to the weak surmisings of a superstitious credulity. Let the Bible then be given to the Pagan, as the only effectual remedy for his absurd and bewildering dreams; and let the Bible be more thoroughly used and studied by the Christian who suffers himself still to be haunted by those miserable apprehensions on which Reason and Revelation unitedly frown.

II.

What a fine example is here of the moulding of an exalted Christian character! This admirable and honored female had to encounter hostile influences the most powerful and yet the most diverse. On the one hand, there was the influence of evil example in almost every conceivable form, and not improbably rendered more difficult to resist, from being associated with the claims of friendship or of domestic affection; and on the other hand, there were the terrors of persecution; there were the most cruel appeals to maternal sensibility; there were the engines of torture displayed and finally put in terrific operation. Here then was the world assailing her both by its flatteries and its frowns; and if she is a Christian at all, she must be so in spite of their combined influence. And it was in consequence of these struggles with the different forms of temptation, that she reached such a point of Christian strength and excellence. Before the experiment was actually made, it might have been doubtful how it would result; and it certainly would not have been strange if, allured on the one hand, or appalled on the other, she had gone back and walked no more with Christ. But the effort by which she sustained herself against such opposition was a security for her being much more than a common Christian. It is by exercise that the spiritual, not less than the physical and the intellectual, waxes strong and vigorous; and as we look for the majestic oak in a rugged soil, so we expect to find the finest specimens of Christian development in circumstances which have put the spirit to the sharpest tests of self-denial and endurance.

Learn then, Christian, what use you are to make in your religious life of apparently adverse circumstances. If the tempter smiles and flatters, you are to resist him. If he frowns and threatens, still you

are to resist him. If you yield at all, you must expect to sink under his power. If you stand firm, you will not only gain a present victory, but will gather strength to enable you to triumph in future conflicts. If you maintain your steadfastness amidst great temptations, your character will be the witness for you — its consistency, energy, sublimity, will mark the school in which you have been trained.

III.

We have here a striking instance of the power of maternal influence, and the workings of maternal affection.

This exalted female seems to have lived very much, though by no means exclusively, for her children. She instructed them in Christian doctrine; she urged upon them Christian obligations; she warned them against devious paths; she prayed with them, and taught them how to pray. With the hand of maternal gentleness and love, she led them on in the path to heaven. She trained them not merely to be Christians, but, as the event proved, to be martyrs; and when she saw them going off to heaven in chariots of glory, it was her privilege no doubt to reflect, that God had made her the instrument of adding seven beloved names to the list of the glorified.

Christian mothers, fear not, I pray you, to magnify your office. You are intrusted with interests that not even an angelic mind can adequately appreciate. You have the first moulding of a principle of immortality. You may be instrumental in adding strength to the Church on earth, and glory to the Church in heaven. Wherever else then you may be delinquent, let it not be in your relation as mothers. You may not be called to educate children for a martyr's crown, but you *are* called to educate them for a crown of life. Let no human

being speak lightly of this office. Believe me, it is yours, in a great degree, to mould the destiny of the world.

But mark the direction which that mother's love took. In the prospect of dying under any circumstances, there is something terrible to nature; and in the prospect of dying from protracted torture — of dying a martyr's death — there is that at which the stoutest natural courage is almost sure to falter. What will not a mother do to save the life of her child; especially to save him from the horrors of a violent death! Here is a mother whose children have the dread alternative of renouncing Christ, or bowing to the block or walking into the fire; and she is exhorting them firmly and fearlessly to choose the latter side. Is it that her maternal affection is asleep? No, it was never more wakeful or active; and this is one reason why she is so earnest that they should not abjure their Saviour. She has counted the cost on the one side and on the other; and the sufferings of the present appear to her as nothing in comparison with the glory of the future. She cheers them on through the dark valley of death, joyful in the thought that persecution is only opening for them the gates of immortality. Let this example be a rebuke to every mother who would counsel her children in any circumstances to the sacrifice of principle; who would shield them from present danger at the expense of exposing them to future evil. Mothers, be true to your children's interests, as immortal beings. That must be at least an ill-directed affection that leads you even to connive at wrong-doing in your children, no matter what may be the expense of doing right. Always encourage them to walk in the path of duty, even though it should lead to the martyr's stake.

IV.

What a signal triumph of Christian faith was here, both in the mother and in her sons! It requires a strong faith to renounce earthly attachments and interests, for the sake of that future, unseen good, which the Gospel promises. It requires a strong faith to be willing to suffer affliction with the people of God, even under ordinary circumstances, rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. But what must be the power of that faith in a mother that can enable her, not only to die calmly and joyfully herself, but to look peacefully on the last agonies of her beloved children, and to speak to them encouraging words, till they had got within the sound of angelic voices! What faith must that have been which nerved those seven young men to submit patiently to the most terrible tortures, rather than obey an edict which required them to disobey their Lord! Surely here was the very sublimity of Christian fortitude — here was a spirit, breathed into the heart by the Almighty Spirit, which persecution, maddened into fury, which death, clothed in its darkest livery, was not strong enough to subdue, or fearful enough to terrify. Here, surely, were some of faith's most decisive and splendid victories.

Here is a study for the infidel. Let him account, if he can, for the energy which faith imparts, for the consolation which faith yields, in consistency with the idea that the Gospel is a fable; and if he cannot account for it, let him show reason, if he has any, why he is not a believer.

Hither let the Christian come for an increase of his faith. Let these sublime lessons, out of the records of martyrdom, fall upon his heart as an encouraging and invigorating influence. Let the effect of them be to make him more willing to have nothing to do in ordering the circumstance of his death, as there is a power in Christian faith that can disarm death of its terrors, even when they are the terrors of martyrdom.

POTAMIÆNA.

BY THE EDITOR.

"Te martyrum candidatus laudat exercitus."

An eloquent living writer, when speaking of the early Christian martyrs, thus beautifully and touchingly expresses her sentiments:— "When in the daily service of our Church, we repeat these words of the sublime hymn—'the noble army of martyrs praise thee'—I wonder sometimes whether it be with a full appreciation of their meaning? Whether we do really reflect on all that this noble army of martyrs hath conquered for us? Did they indeed glorify God through their courage, and seal their faith in their Redeemer with their blood? And if it be so, how is it that we Christians have learned to look coldly upon the effigies of those who sowed the seed of the harvest which we have reaped?—*Sanguis martyrum semen Christianorum!* We may admit that the reverence paid to them in former days was unreasonable and excessive; that credulity and ignorance have in many instances falsified the actions imputed to them; that enthusiasm has magnified their numbers beyond all belief; that when the communion with martyrs was associated with the presence of their material remains, the passion for relics led to a thousand

abuses, and the belief in their intercession to a thousand superstitions. But why, in uprooting the false, uproot also the beautiful and the true? Surely it is not a thing to be set aside or forgotten, that generous men and meek women, strong in the strength and elevated by the sacrifice of a Redeemer, did suffer, did endure, did triumph for the truth's sake; did leave us an example which ought to make our hearts glow within us, in admiration and gratitude! Surely, then, it is no unfit employment for the highest powers of Art, that of keeping alive their blessed and heroic memory; and no desecration of our places of worship that their effigies, truly, or at least worthily, expressed, should be held up to our veneration, and the story of their sublime devotion sometimes brought to remembrance. And this was the opinion strongly expressed by Dr. Arnold, whom no one, I suspect, will suspect of a bearing toward the idolatrous tendencies of Art. In speaking of a visit which he paid to the church of San Stefano at Rome, he remarks, 'No doubt many of the particular stories thus painted will bear no critical examination; it is likely enough, too, that Gibbon has truly accused the general statements of exaggeration. But this is a thankless labor. Divide the sum total of reported martyrs by twenty — by fifty, if you will; after all you have a number of persons of all ages and sexes suffering cruel torments and death for conscience' sake, and for Christ's; and by their sufferings manifestly, with God's blessing, insuring the triumph of Christ's Gospel; neither do I think that we consider the excellence of this martyr-spirit half enough. I do not think that pleasure is a sin; but though pleasure is not a sin, yet surely the contemplation of suffering for Christ's sake is a thing most needful for us in our days, from whom in our daily life suffering seems so far removed. And as God's grace enabled rich and delicate persons, women and even children, to endure all extremities of pain and reproach, in times past; so there is the same grace no less mighty now; and if we do

not close ourselves against it, it might be in us no less glorified in a time of trial.'

"'And why indeed,' (continues our author,) 'should we shut up our hearts against such influences, and force ourselves to regard as a snare, what ought to be a source of divine comfort and encouragement? — of power for the awakening up of those whose minds are absorbed in selfish sorrows, or for the strengthening of those who even now are contending for the truth among us, and who perish martyrs, because there prevails some form of social idolatry, against which they resist unto death!'

"Not that I quite sympathize with the occasion which gave rise to the above beautiful passage in Dr. Arnold's journal. However I may admire the sentiments expressed, to my taste martyrdoms are abhorrent, and I remember that I never entered the church of San Stefano without being sick at heart; those dolorous and sanguinary death-scenes, which make its walls hideous, are no more fitted for spiritual edification, than the spectacle of public executions avails to teach humanity and respect for the law. It is, however, a circumstance worthy of remark, as true now, and truer in the middle ages, that the sympathy of the lower orders was less excited by the apparatus of physical agony than by the bearing of the victim. To them the indomitable courage, the glorious triumph of the sufferer were more than the stake, the wheel, the rack, the scourge, the knife. The former were heart-soothing, soul-lifting, light-giving! The latter had been rendered by the Eccellinos, the Visconti, and other insane monsters of those days, mere common-places, the daily spectacle of real life. The most beautiful and edifying representations of the martyrs are not those which place them before us agonized under the lash or the knife of the executioner, but those in which they look down upon us, from their serene beatitude — their work done, their triumph accomplished, holding

their victorious palm, and wearing their crown of glory; while the story of their sufferings is suggested to the memory by the accompanying attribute, the sword, the arrow, or the wheel."*

If the reader have not been wearied by this long extract, he will, we are persuaded, agree with us that the story of the constancy and courage of the early martyrs deserves honorable mention at our hands who live in more favored times, and he will, we hope, take an interest in the affecting history of one whose sex should have shielded her from brutality and wrong instead of rousing the fierce passions of her persecutors into ungovernable fury. Minute particulars, from the nature of the case, we cannot give; but of the facts recorded there can be no reasonable doubt, especially as they are preserved to us by Eusebius, the earliest historian of the Church. We give the passage from Eusebius in full, although it does not entirely relate to Potamiæna.

"But among these (the catechumens of Origen that suffered martyrdom) Basilides must be numbered the seventh; he who led away the celebrated Potamiæna to execution, concerning whom many traditions are still circulated abroad among the inhabitants of the place, of the innumerable conflicts she endured for the preservation of her purity and her chastity, in which indeed she was eminent. For, besides the perfections of her mind, she was blooming also in the maturity of her personal attractions. Many things are also related of her fortitude in suffering for faith in Christ; and, at length, after horrible tortures and pains, the very relation of which makes one shudder, she was, with her mother Macella, committed to the flames. It is said, indeed, that the judge, Aquila by name, after having applied the several tortures to her on every part of her body, at last threatened

* Mrs. Jameson's "*Sacred and Legendary Art*," pp. 311, 312.

that he would give her body to be abused by the gladiators; but that she, having considered the matter a little, after being asked what she would determine, made such a reply as made it appear that she uttered something deemed impious with them. Immediately, therefore, receiving the sentence of condemnation, she was led away to die by Basilides, one of the officers in the army. But when the multitude attempted to assault and insult her with abusive language, he, by keeping off, restrained their insolence, exhibiting the greatest compassion and kindness to her. Perceiving the man's sympathy, she exhorts him to be of good cheer, for after that she was gone she would intercede for him with her Lord, and it would not be long before she would reward him for his kind deeds towards her. Saying this, she nobly sustained the issue; having boiling pitch poured over different parts of her body, gradually, by little and little, from her feet up to the crown of her head. And such then was the conflict which this noble virgin endured. But not long after, Basilides, being urged to swear on a certain occasion, by his fellow-soldiers, declared that it was not lawful for him to swear at all; for he was a Christian, and this he plainly professed. At first, indeed, they thought that he was thus far only jesting; but as he constantly persevered in the assertion, he was conducted to the judge, before whom, confessing his determination, he was committed to prison. But when some of the brethren came to see him, and inquiring the cause of his sudden and singular resolve, he is said to have declared that Potamiæna, indeed for the three days after her martyrdom, standing before him at night, placed a crown upon his head, and said that she had entreated the Lord on his account, and she had obtained her prayer, and that ere long she would take him with her. On this the brethren gave him the seal (of holy baptism) in the Lord; and he, bearing a distinguished testimony to the Lord, was beheaded. Many others, also, of those at Alexandria,

are recorded as having promptly attached themselves to the doctrine of Christ in these times; and this, by reason of Potamiæna, who appeared in dreams and exhorted many to embrace the divine word. But of these let this suffice."*

Cardinal Baronius, in his "*Annales Ecclesiastici*," ann. 205, gives substantially the same account; it is not necessary, therefore, to quote what he says; M. L'Abbé Fleury, however, referring to Eusebius, and the "*Historia Lausiaca*" of Palladius, records some particulars respecting Potamiæna, which are worth quoting. He is speaking of the violent persecution which raged in Egypt at this time, and especially of the zeal and courage of Origen and his disciples, and he takes occasion to introduce an account of Potamiæna, at whose execution Basilides, subsequently a martyr, attended, and by witnessing whose sufferings he was led to a knowledge of the truth.

"Potamiæna," says Fleury, "was a slave, extremely beautiful; and her master having a desire to abuse her, and not being able to prevail, delivered her to the prefect Aquila, accusing her of being a Christian, and of speaking against the government and the emperors, on account of the persecution. He promised the prefect a considerable sum of money, entreating him not to hurt her, if she would consent to his desires; but to cause her to be put to death if she persisted in her resolution, that she might not scoff at him. The prefect not being able to persuade her, made her undergo several torments; at length he ordered a great caldron full of pitch to be set on the fire; and when it boiled, he said unto her, Go, obey your master, or else be assured that I will cause you to be thrown into this. She answered, God forbid that there should be any judge so unjust as to condemn me to consent to so dishonorable a passion. He afterwards threaten-

* Eusebius's *Eccles. Hist.* p. 223–25—Crusé's Trans.

ed to expose her to be violated by the gladiators; and not being able to move her, he gave orders that she should be stripped of her clothes, and thrown into the caldron. Potamiæna said, I conjure you, by the life of the emperor, not to let me appear naked; command me rather to be let down by degrees into the caldron with my clothes on, and you shall see with what patience I am endued by Jesus Christ, of whom you are ignorant. The prefect granted her this, and after having pronounced sentence, delivered her unto Basilides, who was one of her guards, to carry her to execution. This soldier treated her with abundance of mildness and civility; and kept off the people who pressed on all the way she went, in order to insult Potamiæna, and give her opprobrious language. She bid him be of good courage, and promised that, as soon as she was gone out of this life, she would entreat the Lord to give him grace, and that he should soon feel the effects of her gratitude. When she had thus spoken, they put her feet into the boiling pitch, and dipped her in by degrees to the very top of her head; and thus she finished her martyrdom. Her mother Macella was burnt at the same time. A little after, the soldiers, who were comrades to Basilides, being about to make him swear, probably by some of their false gods, he said, that it was not lawful for him to swear, because he was a Christian; and he declared it publicly. At first they thought that he jested, but finding that he continued to persist in his resolution, they carried him to the prefect, who having heard him make the same confession, caused him to be put in prison; where the Christians came to visit him, asking him the cause of so sudden a change; to which he answered, — Potamiæna appeared to me in the night time, three days after her martyrdom, and placed a crown on my head, saying, that she had besought the Lord to give me grace, and had obtained it; and that he would shortly receive me to glory. The brethren afterwards gave him the seal of the Lord, that is to

say, baptism, and the next day his head was cut off with an axe. St. Potamiæna appeared to several others, in a dream, who were converted to the faith."*

Such are the facts, as recorded by competent authorities, of this noble young confessor of the faith; and we think that when duly considered, they are instructive to a high degree. It was a time of trial, of fierce and violent persecution. It was a time that required courage of no ordinary character to maintain unspotted the purity and consistency of the Christian name. It was not such a time as that in which our lot has been cast, when the young, and the gay, and the beautiful, and the proud, are all Christians in name if not in deed; it was not such a period as this when religion calls for no sacrifices like those which the first professors and confessors of the faith made, gladly and earnestly, and when not to be a Christian is a mark of disgrace to the fair and lovely daughters of our land; nay, it was a time of grievous suffering for the truth. The Lord's name was blasphemed; His holy religion treated with open contumely and scorn; His disciples made the mark of pagan intolerance, ribaldry and oppression. Nothing was sacred in their eyes; no rights were respected, no privileges were accorded. It was enough that one was a Christian to condemn him, unheard, to the most ingenious and cruel tortures, and to the most unworthy and disgraceful injuries. We are speaking of the times of persecution, for it was then that the Christians were abandoned to the combined fury of rage, vexation, fear and hatred of the heathen priesthood and the besotted people. At such a time there were, blessed be God, those who counted not their lives dear unto themselves for the honor and glory of His name. They had abandoned the idol temples and services; they rejected with contemptuous indigna-

* Fleury's "*Eccles. Hist.*" vol. I. p. 318.—Lond. 1728.

tion the abominations of heathenism; and they adopted new motives, new principles, new thoughts, new desires, new hopes. And their religion, in this wise, became with them a living thing. Day by day, and hour by hour, they lived as knowing not at what moment they should be called upon to lay down their lives for the truth; and they shrunk not, they faltered not, they were ready to die as well as live. This was their language to the heathen around them, whom they honestly believed to be under the immediate influence of evil spirits:—

"We have forewarned you to beware, lest those demons, whom we have before accused, should deceive you, and prevent you from reading and understanding what we say. For they strive to retain you as their slaves and servants, and sometimes by revelations in dreams, and at other times again by magical tricks, enslave those who strive not at all for their own salvation. In like manner, as we also, since we have been obedient to the Word, abstain from such things, and, through the Son, follow the only unbegotten God. We, who once delighted in fornication, now embrace chastity only; we, who once used magical arts, have consecrated ourselves to the good and unbegotten God; we, who loved above all things the gain of money and possessions, now bring all that we have into one common stock, and give a part to every one that needs; we who hated and killed one another, and permitted not those of another nation, on account of their different customs, to live with us under the same roof, now, since the appearing of Christ, live at the same table, and *pray for our enemies*, and endeavor to persuade those who unjustly hate us, that they also, living after the excellent institutions of Christ, may have good hope with us, to obtain the same blessings from God the Lord of all."*

And in full accordance with such an avowal did they live and were

* "*First Apology of Justin Martyr*," § 17.

ever ready to die. Potamiæna was not the least illustrious example, in that age of constancy and courage. We know not who had been her instructor in the truth; we know nought of the circumstances under which she was educated; we are only told that her mother, Macella, suffered at the same time with her daughter; but this is a significant and suggestive fact. It is not unlikely that Potamiæna was a Christian from her birth; that her mother had taken care to have her ingrafted into the holy family of Christ's soldiers and servants in early infancy; and had bestowed upon her the care and attention which a mother's loving heart never fails to bestow. We can readily imagine how Potamiæna was nurtured in the faith, and fed with food convenient to her; how soon she was taught the truth as it is in Jesus, how diligently she was instructed in the faith of our holy religion. We can easily see how the good seed, sown in no uncongenial soil and watered by the dews of divine grace, sought for and obtained by earnest prayer, sprang up and bare fruit in a holy and consistent life and conversation. And in this way, we can readily understand how it was and why it was that she manifested such courage and constancy in the hour of her last trial. She must have known that it might please God to call her, too, to Himself, by the fiery path of martyrdom; she must have known and heard of more than one who manfully endured unto the end for Christ's sake; and, doubtless, when she betook herself to more and more fervent prayer and supplication, as persecution raged more and more violently, she must have bethought her of the time when she should be called upon to bear testimony to the truth, and she must have experienced the power of divine grace which can sustain the weakest saint in the fiercest conflict with the evil one. Soon, too soon, did the bitter hour arrive, when was to be tested the strength of those principles in which she had been nurtured, and the reality of that faith which she professed. The tender and

beautiful maiden, the lovely and delicate girl, of whom suffering had not yet made trial, was not wanting in that hour. We have told the story above, and we ask of those who read it, to meditate upon the life and career of Potamiæna. It will do them good; it will more particularly benefit those of her own sex to reflect upon it, and to ask themselves some such questions as these: — What would *I* do, were it needful to choose between compliance with the world or the martyr's doom? What was the secret of her strength, and why am *I* not as strong and courageous for God's truth as she? Is not the strength which she had within *my* reach, and are not the same enemies with which she contended unto death, *my* enemies too? What am *I* doing for the truth? What sacrifices am *I* making? What courage am *I* displaying in Christ's behalf?

Ah, dear and gentle reader, believe me, the religion of the cross is the same now which it was then; it requires the same spirit of self-sacrifice, and the same entire devotion to the service of our Lord and Master, which it did then; let us, then, manfully fight under Christ's banner against sin, the world, and the devil; and let us strive ever to continue His faithful soldiers and servants unto our life's end.

ADELAIDE.

BY THE EDITOR.

It is a source of deep regret to thoughtful Christian people who believe in the communion of saints, that we know so little respecting the lives and career of holy men and women in the first ages of the Faith. At all times it is delightful to read of the triumphs of the Gospel over the world; especially as it is exemplified in the daily Christian course of some servant of Christ Jesus, who though in the world is not of the world. History is too generally taken up with the great, the champions of truth and the leaders of error, the victories and defeats, the dissensions and strife, the contendings for the faith, and such like; and most of those who read Church history imbibe the idea that the records of the past contain little else than painful evidences of the militant character of the Church, and prove conclusively the corruption of our nature and the comparatively slow progress of the Gospel towards universal sway. It is a mistake, however, to suppose that the history of Christian people, in their personal, individual relations and influence, does not form an integral portion of ecclesiastical history; equally mistaken is the notion, that what we

learn from ancient writers of the Church, as a body of Christian people, conveys always a clear and accurate impression of individuals in that body; and hence had we the biographies of saints and martyrs in the early ages of the Church, written out with care and fulness and separate from puerile traditions and absurdities, something like what we have of eminent Christians in our own day, we should obtain a much better view of Church history than we now do, and should feel a much deeper and stronger interest in our brethren and sisters in the faith who lived centuries ago, than we can now possibly attain.

The thought has often occurred to our mind, that Protestants have committed an error in so generally ignoring all the holy men and women of primitive days; for what reason is there why we should not feel as deep an interest in the struggles of some brother in the faith sixteen or eighteen centuries ago, as in those of one nearer our own times? Is it not the same Saviour, the same Gospel, the same truth? and were not they the same as we in needing the Holy Spirit's influence and power; in their longing desires for purity and peace, and in their striving after holiness of heart and life? Was not the world then the enemy of the truth, even as it is now? Were not their trials like ours, their hopes the same, their strength drawn from the same source, their faith the same, their obedience to the law of God the same as ours? Why, then, should we not gladly acknowledge that they were indeed our elder brethren in Christ, whom we love to honor, and whose lives we love to study? Lapse of time is as nothing in the Church, because even as the Head is divine and eternal, so shall the Church, which is His body, never fail, never pass away; nations and kingdoms, governments and institutions of men, may and must change, and sink into nothingness, but the Church of Christ is changeless and perpetual; and as it has lived through all the convulsions of past ages, even so shall it live and flourish until the consummation of

all things; the gates of hell shall not prevail against it; "heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away."

Is it not evident, then, that Christ's servants are to each other in the relation of brethren and sisters, and that it matters not in what age of the world they live, or in what country, or among what people, so far as it concerns other members of the same great household? Yea, we are all one family in the Lord, and His Church comprises all nations and people and tongues, in all periods of the world. On this account, we think that the records of holy deeds in other days ought not to be forgotten, and we could wish that they who, with us, detest all Popish abomination and fictitious lives of the saints, might also love, as we do, to search for and admire, with devout thankfulness, the evidences of godly living in Christ Jesus, in the midst of a naughty world, in primitive times; we could also desire that our Protestant brethren might agree with us that it is every way wrong and unwise to give up the entire field of early religious biography to the Romanist, and in this way practically declare that we do not look upon the early Christians as our brethren in Christ, as partakers of the same hopes and looking for the same glorious rewards to which we desire to attain.

Such thoughts as these are not unnaturally connected with the life and career of one of the eminent females of the third century; and thus increase the deep regret that we cannot but feel on recollecting how few particulars have been handed down respecting her. ADELAIDE, the wife of Lupo, duke of Bergamo, was one of those illustrious women of whom we could desire to know much more than we do. The period at which she lived, her high rank and important position in life, the facts which are on record concerning her illustrious daughter, and the interest which unfailingly attaches to those who have been nursing-fathers and nursing-mothers to the church, — all

these, and such like, tend to make the story of her life not only attractive but also full of value to the Christian reader. We shall give what little we have been able to glean from such sources as were at our command.

It appears, then, that the noble lady of whom we are speaking was the mother of Grata, who is regarded with peculiar feelings of veneration by the people of Bergamo. Grata, as we learn, was married to a nobleman of her native city, who was a Christian. Through her husband's influence Grata was induced to listen to the good news of salvation through a Redeemer, and shortly after his death she embraced the faith of Christ, with a full conviction of its truth and an earnest desire that all within her reach should know and feel its life-giving power and efficacy. By degrees, also, she withdrew herself, as much as possible, from the world and worldly pursuits and pleasures, and devoted herself to the duties and services of religion, leading, as we are told, a most chaste and holy life. It was not long before she had occasion to give public testimony to the truth of the holy religion of Christ; and as it was connected with an interesting, though rather doubtful, legend of the third century, we shall be pardoned, we hope, if we make a brief digression at this point.

The emperor Maximian, so the account runs, brought out of the East a body of troops known as the *Theban legion*. This legion, it is related, consisted entirely of Christians, and, as may be supposed, would not readily be inclined to join in the cruelties of which the soldiers were too often made the instruments against the followers of Christ. The emperor was marching into Gaul and the region near the Alps, and from some cause or other, it entered into his evil heart to persecute the Christians. It was a very common practice, and an easy way to gratify a bloodthirsty disposition by slaughtering unoffending and innocent persons, who, so far from resisting, were rather

disposed to court death and suffering on account of their religion. Well, the emperor issued his orders to this effect, and by a refinement of cruelty he commanded the Theban legion to fall upon and murder their fathers and brethren in the faith. The soldiers, to a man, refused to obey the order, and, together with their officers, sent a respectful remonstrance to the emperor. We give it as it is summed up in the words of M. L'Abbé Fleury,—"Sir, we are your soldiers, but the servants of the true God, as we freely confess: we owe you service in war, and Him innocence; we receive pay from you, from Him life; we cannot obey you by renouncing God our Creator, our Master, and yours likewise, save when you reject Him. If we are commanded nothing against our duty to Him, we readily obey, as we have done to this present time; otherwise we will obey Him rather than you. We will readily oppose all your enemies, whosoever they are; but think not that we can be allowed to dip our hands in the blood of innocent persons. We have taken an oath to God, before we took one to you, and you can place no confidence in our second oath, should we violate the first. You command us to search out for Christians in order to punish them; you need not inquire for others, behold we are here. We confess God the Father, Author of all things, and His Son Jesus Christ; we have seen our companions slain in our sight without lamenting for them; we rejoice at the honor they have had to suffer for their God; neither this extremity nor despair hath urged us to revolt; we have arms in our hands, but resist not; because we had rather die blameless than live culpable." We may well suppose that the haughty tyrant was enraged at their course. First, he sent and had the legion decimated—a fearful punishment in an army. The rest were ordered anew to persecute the Christians. They refused likewise; again were they decimated; but to no purpose; they exhorted one another to stand firm to their profession and die for the truth. The emperor had

no hopes of overcoming such constancy, and as he had gone too far to recede, with Roman obstinacy he ordered the main body of the army to cut them down as mutineers; they offered no resistance; they dropped their arms, and patiently suffered death, rather than imbrue their hands in the innocent blood of their fellow-Christians.

It was with one of these soldiers that Grata's name stands connected. Alexander, so the Bergamesque Chronicle tells us, was one of the legionary soldiers, and was decapitated outside the gate of Bergamo. Grata, it appears, did not keep aloof from this martyrdom; nay, she was present and beheld the sad scene, and so highly were her feelings of admiration excited by witnessing the courage and constancy of Alexander, that she reverently took up the severed head, wrapt it in a napkin, and caused the sacred remains of the martyr to be honorably buried. Truly, when we consider the circumstances, it was a noble act of courage, and a most open profession of her own readiness to do and die for the truth of the Gospel!

To come back now from this rather long digression, to the lady whose name stands at the head of our article. Adelaide, it seems, was not a Christian, and together with her husband, the duke Lupo, was, for years after her daughter grew up, in the bondage of paganism. We do not suppose that she was addicted to the vile superstitions of that day, and we can readily conceive that she was too right-minded to yield to the absurdities of heathen mythology and worship. Far from it. She may have entertained some vague, but inoperative, views on the subject of religion; and like many others in that period, it seems quite reasonable to believe, that she was ready to hear, and certainly not actively inimical to the Gospel. Like Gallio, probably, she cared for none of these things, and with the culpable indifference of the rich and powerful, she most probably looked upon the whole matter as mere logomachy, and beneath the attention of persons of

her rank and importance. That neither she nor the duke of Bergamo was inclined to hate the truth or persecute its followers, seems certain from the fact that Grata was married to a Christian, and at no distant day, became a zealous and devoted Christian herself. In this way it pleased God to open their eyes. Grata labored earnestly for the conversion of her parents. With what feelings of mingled love, respect and commiseration must she have approached her mother! How patient and careful she must have been in her efforts to lead the noble lady to the true faith! What a labor of love! what a study for the Christian! what an example to all, in all periods, to spare no exertions to bring all within our sphere and influence to true repentance, lively faith, and ardent devotion of soul, body and spirit, to the service of our Redeemer! How truly, too, can many a Christian mother and daughter sympathize with Adelaide and Grata! The one, full of affection for her child, but ignorant of the truth, and of her responsibilities and duties; the other, equally affectionate, and more truly alive to the needs of her parents. Gradually, but steadily, did light dawn upon the mother. She could not but see how pure, and noble, and unselfish was the faith of Christ and His people. She could not be insensible to the powerful and convincing arguments from miracles and prophecy of the Divine character and obligation of our holy religion. She could not but witness, and witness with astonishment, the change in her own daughter, who now was joyful when before she had been sad, now was at peace when formerly there had been no rest for her weary spirit, and now was full of hope, and joy, and certainty of the blessings of another and a better world, when previously all had been dark, unknown and frightful. Doubtless, these and the like considerations produced their legitimate effect, and Adelaide was led to a knowledge of the truth.

We know not how long it was before the efforts of Grata were suc-

cessful. It may have been months and years before her prayers were answered; we cannot tell; but this we do know, and this we hope our readers will ever bear in mind, viz., that faithful prayer and faithful labor will never lose their reward. No discouragements ought for a moment to induce us to remit our exertions or spare our prayers; God's own time must be waited for, and in His good time the result will manifest His truth and the faithfulness of His promises. Adelaide became a Christian, and not only so, the father of Grata was led to the same conviction and to the same acknowledgment of the truth. It was a joyful day, a happy season of earnest outpourings of thanksgivings and prayers, when the duke of Bergamo and the noble Adelaide came humbly to the ministering servant of God, and at his hands received baptism and thereby openly professed themselves the followers and servants of Jesus Christ. Blessed is the daughter who thus labors for the truth; doubly, trebly blessed the parents whom God has permitted to have such a child as Grata was.

Nor was this all. The chronicle goes on to state what Adelaide did to show the sincerity of her belief in Jesus. She was not content to be baptized into Christ without manifesting the fruits of faith in Him. She was now as anxious as her daughter to do all in her power to spread abroad the good news of salvation through a Redeemer; and as a pious offering from herself and her husband, the cathedral at Bergamo was founded. The Gospel was preached, the Christian name glorified, the heathen people brought into the Church; thus glorifying God and ministering to the salvation of souls.

Of the concluding years of Adelaide we have no particular account, nor are we able to say when she was removed from this earthly scene to another and a better world. It seems probable, however, that it was not very many years after their conversion that both Adelaide and Lupo were taken away. Thus, as Mrs. Jameson has related it,

Grata was charged with the government of the republic of Bergamo. She discharged the duties of her high and difficult position with singular prudence and success, "ruling the people more by kindness than by the terrors of the law, and every where, of course, protecting and propagating Christianity. She built three or more churches, and founded a hospital for the poor and sick, in which she ministered to the sufferers with her own hands; and after governing the state in great prosperity for several years, she died, and her pure spirit ascended into heaven, there to receive the due reward of her righteousness."

It would be an interesting question to consider here the state of the world at this period, when the final conflict between heathenism and the Gospel drew near, and when under Constantine the Christian triumphed and trampled under foot the effete system of paganism. It is a period in ecclesiastical history full of interest and moment, and we would that we had time for its adequate consideration; but inasmuch as the career of Adelaide and the circumstances connected with her conversion and her latter years, do not seem to be of much importance or influence beyond the sphere of the city and vicinity of Bergamo, we feel compelled to leave the fruitful topic suggested above, and with a brief extract from Mrs. Jameson relative to the artistic treatment of the patron saints of Bergamo and the duke and duchess of the same city, conclude all that we have to say at present:

"In the pictures of Cariani, Salmeggia, and Lorenzo Lotto, all excellent painters of Bergamo, we find these saints (St. Lupo, St. Adelaide, St. Grata, and St. Alexander the martyr) constantly represented. St. Alexander is habited as a Roman warrior, bearing the palm; St. Grata is usually carrying the head of St. Alexander, which is her proper attribute; St. Lupo wears a royal crown, and St. Adelaide a crown and long veil; as in a picture by Salmeggia, now in the

Brera at Milan. There is a fine statue of St. Lupo in a tabernacle above the porch of the cathedral of Bergamo.

"In the church of Sant' Alessandro-in-Colonna, at Bergamo, I found two very poetical and dramatic pictures of the martyrdom of St. Alexander. In the first he is decapitated; in the second he is borne to the tomb by two Christian converts; St. Grata follows, carrying the severed head reverently folded in a napkin; as the drops of blood fall to the earth, flowers spring forth, which are gathered by the maidens attending on St. Grata. Here we have, in a novel form, the familiar and poetical allegory which represents flowers, or fountains of pure water, or branches of olive, springing from the blood of the martyr."*

* Mrs. Jameson's "*Sacred and Legendary Art*," p. 391.

ST. AGNES.

BY THE REV. SAMUEL OSGOOD.

The great struggle between paganism and Christianity was drawing near its crisis. During the long peace of more than forty years which followed the decree of toleration by the emperor Gallienus in the year 259, the Christians had been gaining in numbers and power, thus preparing themselves unconsciously for the last trial which was to precede the triumph of the Church and to place the cross of Christ above the standard of the Cæsars. Then the persecution under Diocletian began, and continued under his successors with intervals of quiet for eight years, ending with the edict of toleration in 311, which Galerius, before the bloodthirsty instigator of cruelty, sent forth when severe sickness and approaching death opened his eyes to the impolicy and inhumanity of his atrocious courses. Time would fail us to tell even the names of the conspicuous victims of this persecution. It is our office now to select one from this saintly company, whose story has in itself and in its consequences an interest peculiarly attractive. Where in the copious romance of Christian history shall we find a name more winning than that of Agnes, the Roman maiden who died

for her faith when the age of the martyrs was closing, and bore an apostle's firmness in the fragile form of a tender girl. In innocence as in name, a lamb, she stands fitly among the rear-guard of that white-robed army of martyrs who were led by the Lamb of God to subdue the kingdoms of the world.

Of the birth and childhood of Agnes few incidents have come down to us. She was born in Rome towards the close of the third century during the peaceful interval that intervened between the decrees of Gallienus and Diocletian. She was educated under the auspices of a Church rich in examples of piety and ministries of faith. The most moderate estimate of the growth of Christianity in Rome gives fifty thousand as the number of Christians in the city in the middle of the third century, and certainly forty years of undisturbed progress must have vastly enlarged the ranks of the believers and increased their means of instruction and influence. In the hearts of some of the Roman clergy there may have been, even then, a spark of the ambition that afterwards flamed up in the dominion of Leo, and Gregory, and Hildebrand; but the memory of suffering was too fresh, and the graves beneath the catacombs of the Eternal City were too new, to allow spiritual pride to lord it over the people during the period of comparative repose. Before the childhood of Agnes had passed, stormy times had come, and many a victim dying for the faith revived the records of the primitive martyrs, and called upon all the faithful to stand ready for their own day of need.

It is not easy even in sketching the history of a youth of our own times to trace exactly the influences that have most to do with forming the character. Certainly we might stray much from the truth if we should write the memoirs of a young Christian as necessarily involved in the most conspicuous theological movements of the age. Many a soul may find peace in God without being agitated by the

rival sects that claim to interpret the truths of the divine kingdom. Yet in an age when Christianity stood in conflict with the ruling powers, and by fear and by affection Christians were united against the pagan world, we may justly regard each individual as intimately connected with the interests of the entire Church. Certainly it is no stretch of credulity to regard a Roman girl of quick mind and favored station as no stranger to the leading men and measures that had, under Providence, shaped the fortunes of Christendom. The childhood of Agnes, although not a palmy season in the intellectual life of the Church, certainly not marked by the sway of men so brilliant as those who had passed away and those who were just coming upon the stage, was from this very fact peculiarly interesting. The season was peculiarly a seed-time in the Christian field, and the fruit of former harvests was preparing in elect minds to yield its increase. In chosen succession, the apostolic fathers, the apologists, and the illustrious theologians in their train, pre-eminent among them Clement and Origen in the east, and Tertullian and Cyprian in the west, had come and gone. The brilliant men of the fourth century, who made the Church more glorious by their zeal and eloquence than Constantine by his crown, had not appeared. The blood of Cyprian, the bishop of Carthage, as if a libation to pagan hatred, was shed just before the forty years' peace began, and the close of this peace guarded the childhood of Agnes and the youth of Athanasius. Thus between two renowned periods of intellectual power, this Christian maiden arose, receiving in no small measure the influence of the leading minds who had preceded her, and by her winning and heroic piety, giving no small incentive to the heroes of the opening century.

It would be however straining the point too far to undertake to trace out in the faith or convictions of this Roman girl the influence of any peculiar theological or philosophical teachers. We only know

that her state of mind was such as the Church stood ready to form, and that she loved Christ with an absorbing devotion. She was called to choose between the gods of the pagan temples and that meek and majestic Messiah in whom the Word of God was made flesh and dwelt among men. It is not difficult to conceive of her motives as this choice was presented to her, whether in her conversations with young men and maidens of the pagan creed, or by the frequent contrast between the pageantry of the reigning idolatry and the lessons of that worship which constantly presented to her heart the life and death of the Prince of Peace and Saviour of the world. She believed and she loved. With that mystical and sacred passion which has been repeated in so many cases, and which in its essential features may be marked in devotees singularly varying in forms of worship, conspicuous sometimes in a Protestant churchwoman like Margaret Godolphin, or a Friend like Elizabeth Gurney, as in a Theresa of Spain, or the Catharines of Italy, Agnes gave herself to her Saviour with her whole heart, and did not shrink from pledging her fidelity in the language which pious feeling has been so ready to borrow from human love. Her faith and affections being thus directed towards Him who was to her at once the perfect humanity and the revelation of God, whatever illustrated the truth of Christ or the power of His foes, of course fed her enthusiasm and strengthened her resolution. At church, she found herself met in every hymn and prayer, every homily and rite, by that holy and winning Saviour. The year itself, as its months passed, instead of being marked by dates of battles or idolatries, was to her a calendar of His life, death, and triumphs; for to her, far more than to the general congregation, there was a peculiar power in the festivals that began with the joy in Christ's birth and ended with the promise of the Comforter.

Agnes thus comes before us as a Christian girl of rapturous piety,

who gave herself to her religion as fully and fondly as her companions in station gave themselves to the world, its pleasures, and its dignities. She is described by writers near her own time as finding in her great wealth and beauty not occasions of worldliness, but means of sacrifice and causes of suffering. It needs some effort of thought to enable us to conceive of the state of mind which should lead the Roman officials to persecute and put to death a lovely and gentle maiden like Agnes. But remembering our poor human nature as history presents it — remembering the fate decreed by Christians for Joan of Arc, — remembering how much loveliness fell by the guillotine and the mob, in a later age that boasted of being free from all superstition whether Christian or pagan, and we shall not find it hard to see among the countrymen of Scipio and Antoninus the murderers of St. Agnes. Let a brief sketch suffice to show the course of events that ended in her martyrdom.

In every age, the pride of social caste is one of the most powerful passions and interests in life. Even now few injuries are so slowly forgiven as those which are regarded as aimed at the social position of the offended party. It was comparatively a small thing in the eyes of the young patricians of Rome, for young ladies of their own rank to visit Christian churches or accept the Christian religion, for the empire was even proud of embracing all worships within its Pantheon. But when Christianity began to make social distinctions, and girls of wealth and beauty refused the offers of pagan young men from preference to their own creed, or from their resolution to forego marriage, that they might devote themselves with singleness of heart to the interests of the Church, the feeling was quite different, and the rage of the offended patricians knew no bounds. But what could they do? If a man offended them they might kill him in open fight. But a young woman is a far different antagonist, and war itself generally favors a

chivalry that makes a brave man her protector. Bigotry, ever ready to be the sophist of the passions, and gratify them in the name of conscience, here came to the rescue of offended pride and baffled desire. Her suitors finding her proof against all their importunities, now tried a method which they supposed must needs bring her to terms. They accused her to the governor, not expecting or wishing her death indeed, but supposing that the terrors of the trial would subdue her obstinacy.

The oldest legend speaks thus of the immediate cause of her arrest. "It chanced that the son of the prefect of Rome beheld her one day as he rode through the city, and became violently enamored, and desired to have her for his wife. He asked her in marriage of her parents, but the maiden repelled all his advances. Then he brought rich presents, bracelets of gold, and gems, and rare jewels, and precious ornaments, and promised her all the delights of the world, if she would consent to be his wife. But she rejected him and his gifts, saying, 'Away from me, tempter! for I am betrothed to a lover, who is greater and fairer than any earthly suitor. To Him I have pledged my faith, and He will crown me with jewels, compared with which thy gifts are dross.'" The legend goes on to tell that the youth fell sick, and that the physicians declared that their art could avail nothing in his case. "Then the prefect questioned his son, and the young man confessed, saying, 'My father, unless thou procure me Agnes to be my wife, I die.'" The prefect loved his son tenderly, and besought Agnes and her parents to favor his suit. But Agnes answered as before, and the prefect now learning that Agnes was a Christian, and that her husband of whom she spake was no other than Jesus Christ, resolved at once to bring her within his power by the edict in force against Christians. First, and vainly, bidding her, if she would remain unmarried, enter the service of the goddess Vesta, he broke out into the fiercest threats upon her refusal.

Before the Roman prefect Agnes is now arraigned. Her judge would not willingly be more severe than was necessary to secure her submission, and employed at first the arts of persuasion, as the legend also says. But when Agnes resolutely persisted in her purpose, and avowed that she was consecrated to Christ and would have no other bridegroom, the prefect changed his tone and resorted to threats and tortures. We can hardly believe the record of the cruelties that were heaped upon her, so utterly fiendish seems such treatment of a delicate maiden on the part of men not strangers to the heroism of their time and nation. We understand the record better, however, by learning from the investigations of the most reliable historian* of Rome and its monuments, that Agnes was arraigned not in the year 304 or '5, as is commonly stated, but in 310 when the city was abandoned to the cruel lusts of the tyrant Maxentius, who spared no age, and whose ferocity was most severe upon the sex most entitled to his protection. The prefect Sempronius was probably one of his own creatures, and in the spirit of his master was ready to torture the innocence which defied his persuasion.

Behold the trials in store for this tender child of faith. Great fires were kindled before her eyes, iron hooks, racks, and other instruments of torture were brought, and she was assured that her limbs should be torn, and her body thrown to the flames, if she did not recant. The maiden did not shrink from these, but looked resolutely upon her executioners, as if they were to lead her to triumph. She was dragged before the idols and commanded to sacrifice, and with the hand left free to offer incense, we have St. Ambrose's authority for saying, that she made the sign of the cross.

Sempronius had in store one insult yet more gross. He threat-

* Nibby. Roma nell' anno 1838.

ened to place her in a house of infamy, where she would be exposed to the outrages of debauchees. We know very well that there is a point at which admiration is changed into utter hatred and the fascination of love is transformed into its opposite. The beauty that at first charms the senses may ere long craze the imagination into the most malignant purposes, and among the constant forms of malice none is more marked than that of man towards the woman that scorns him. The record of murder every year, and almost every week, shows how brutally man may treat her whom he should protect, and that it is not true that

"Hell knows no fury like a woman scorned."

So the patricians of Rome, with the prefect at their head, pursued Agnes with rage more engrossing than if a strong man were the victim instead of a feeble girl. All of her attractiveness but added to their madness, and made them more determined to subdue by cruelty the loveliness which they could not conquer by persuasion. Agnes replied calmly to the new threat: — "You may shed my blood, but my body which is consecrated to Christ you can never profane." We need not try to portray the bearing of the saint in the den of shame to which she was consigned, and before the crowd of libertines who thronged to behold beauty and innocence thus abandoned to their gaze. But the God who promises the vision of Himself to the pure in heart, did not desert her. There was something in her expression that struck the profligates with awe, so that they did not dare to approach her. The legend already quoted states that when she saw herself stripped of her garments, she bent down her head in meek shame and prayed; and immediately her hair, which was already long and abundant, became like a veil, covering her whole person from head to

foot. One who alone presumed to be rude to her was repelled in a manner supposed to be supernatural, and fell blind and faint to the ground, only to be restored by the prayers of her whom he had so insulted.

The chief accuser of Agnes, maddened to desperation by being thus baffled in his purpose, labored now for her destruction, and sought to bring the judge to extreme measures. The legend, however, says that Sempronius desired to save Agnes, but was forced to condemn her by the mob, who cried out that she was a sorceress and not fit to live. The prefect or his substitute, enraged by seeing all his threats so baffled, did not need much importunity to induce him to condemn her to die by the sword. It may be that the previous assault upon her purity had some bearing upon this final sentence, for Suetonius, in his Life of Tiberius, says, that by an ancient Roman custom, virgins could not be put to death. "Agnes went," says St. Ambrose, "to the place of execution with more joy than others go to their bridal." The executioner to the last strove, as he was secretly instructed, to induce her to recant, and to the last she bore firm witness of her faith and her vow. She offered a brief prayer, bowed her head in adoration, and received the stroke of death. It drew tears from the beholders to see so fair and tender a maiden, laden with fetters, standing fearless before the executioner, who with trembling hand did his cruel office with a single stroke. So died Agnes, fitly called the saintly, the victim of wounded pride, baffled passion, political jealousy, and pagan bigotry. The legend says that an attempt was first made to destroy her by fire, and that the faggots refused their flame.

She died and her name soon became fragrant in the Church, and her virtues were transfigured in the enthusiasm of her admirers. Tradition states that as on a certain day her parents, with many others, were praying at her sepulchre, St. Agnes herself appeared before

them, all radiant of aspect; by her side was a lamb whiter than the driven snow, and she spoke words of comfort that sent the mourners to their homes with joy. Two churches bear her name in Rome, and commemorate the places of her exposure and of her burial. The former stands in the Piazza Navona, and was built by Innocent X.; the latter is the more ancient one, and stands in the Suburbano di Constantino, a mile and three quarters from the Porta Pia upon the Via Nomenta. Anastasius, the librarian, in his Life of Sylvester I., says that Constantine himself, at the request of his daughter Constantina, built a basilica of the blessed martyr Agnes, and then enumerates the donations and grants made by that emperor to this church. In confirmation of this notice there was to be read in a vaulted chapel or tribune an acrostic narrating the facts, in lines whose initials formed the words 'Constantina Deo.' Near this church, which was erected about the year 324, the pope Liberius lived on his return from exile, and he ornamented the tomb of the saint with slabs of marble, upon one of which the pope Damasus I., whose magnificent tastes were so marked in the history of the fourth century, inscribed the following eulogy, which is still preserved, having been uncovered in 1728 by the care of Marangoni.

"Fama refert sanctos dudum retulisse parentes
Agnen cum lugubres cantus tuba concrepuisset;
Nutricis gremium subito liquisse puellam
Sponte trucis calcasse minas rabiemque tyranni
Urere cum flammis voluisset nobile corpus
Viribus immensum parvis superasse timorem
Nudaque profusum crinem per membra dedisse
Ne Domini templum facies peritura videret.
O, veneranda mihi sanctum decus alma pudoris;
Ut Damasi precibus faveas precor inclyta martyr."

This church is the oldest Christian church in Rome, next to that of St. Clement, and is supposed by some to be as old as that. It was rebuilt by pope Honorius, about the year 626, and loaded with ornaments. The Mosaic with which he decorated the apsis or vault remains to this day. At various times, and after various catastrophes, it was restored or adorned by Adrian I. in 755, and by Alexander IV. and Paul V. in their day. Paul built the great altar with that wealth and magnificence of marble, which remains to this time. He also deposited the remains of the saint in a silver sarcophagus. The church so often renewed preserves its basilical form, and is the only one in which the "*porticus superior*," as described by Vrituvius, remains intact. It is situated at the bottom of a valley, near the entrance of the cemetery in which St. Agnes was buried, and which in part is still accessible. Her statue is of oriental alabaster and of gilt bronze, the work of Nicolo Cordieri. The mosaic above mentioned as made by order of Honorius I., represents Agnes with a hand from heaven placing a crown upon her head. She stands between the popes Symmachus and Honorius, who present to her the church which they have rebuilt. In the left nave is found the encomium inscribed by Damasus I.

The name of Agnes has been joined with those of the Blessed Mother and of St. Thecla, as of the three chief among the patron saints of purity. Her fair and holy image has haunted the visions of devotees, and hovered over the grim legions of Monasticism. A fierce champion of the cross like Martin of Tours was fond of meditating upon her virtues in his prayers; and that peerless sage in mystical piety, Thomas à Kempis, regarded her as his tutelary spirit. The arts have been eloquent in her behalf. Next to the evangelists and apostles, there is no saint whose effigy is older. It is found on the ancient glass and earthenware vessels of the Christians of the early part of the fourth century, with her name inscribed, although without the lamb, which in later times has always marked her with this symbol of purity, as patroness

of maidens. As the martyr she bears the palm, seldom the book. She is sometimes represented as holding an olive branch with the palm, and sometimes as crowned with olive. Andrea del Sarto, Martin Schoen, Titian, Paul Veronese, have employed their genius upon this fair saint. The strong and brilliant pencil of Tintoretto, somewhat too theatrically perhaps, has represented her as giving sight to the son of Sempronius; and Domenichino, in one of his most admired if not admirable compositions, has painted the Christian virgin raising her eyes to heaven whence angels are bringing her the palms of martyrdom, whilst one of the executioners plunges a sword into her bosom. No painter or poet, however, has given so beautiful an emblem of Agnes as that which the Roman Church has associated with her shrine. Every year, in the temple erected over her tomb, on her festival two lambs are blessed at high mass, which are thence carried to the pope by whom they are blessed again; afterwards they are sent to the nuns of St. Lawrence's in Panisperna, or sometimes to the Capucinesses, who make of their wool palliums, which his holiness blesses and sends to archbishops, as an emblem of meekness and purity.

We do not forget that the Roman Church has given the tinge of its own ghostly notions of the glory of celibacy to its records of primitive Christianity, and we reserve the right of distinguishing between the Scriptural and the Monastic doctrines upon that subject. The Gospel honors those who are willing to forego the privileges of home and marriage to give all their time and strength to the cause of God. The monk claims for celibacy a virtue of its own, and regards marriage as necessarily a departure from the purest holiness. Although, perhaps, somewhat tinged by the asceticism so conspicuous in the following century, and which even in her own time filled the oriental deserts with hermits and monks, Agnes must be in truth regarded as animated by the nobler idea of virginity, and as refusing a husband, that she

might serve with all her time and strength Him whose Bride is the Church.

The English people, always fond of connecting church associations with domestic affections and pleasures, used to make of the feast of St. Agnes, January 21, a holyday for women, as appears from the Council of Worcester in 1240. We best describe the holyday by quoting the account of it given by the "Old dames" to the Lady Madeline, in Keats' charming poem, "The Eve of St. Agnes."

"They told her how upon St. Agnes' Eve,
Young virgins might have visions of delight,
And soft adorings from their loves receive
Upon the honey'd middle of the night
If ceremonies due they did aright;
As supperless to bed, they must retire,
And couch supine their bodies lily white;
Nor look behind nor sideways, but require
Of Heaven with upward eyes for all that they desire."

To us this Roman girl stands as a sacred ideal of the Christian maiden. Her name we may not invoke in prayer. Her purity and heroism we may admire and commend to the honor of the maidens of our time, who are tempted by powers more insidious than the arts and threats of Sempronius. The world has not changed its heart so much as its creed and costume. Its corrupt fashions would tyrannize over our daughters with the pride of the Cæsars, and a meretricious literature lurks in our journals and romances more dangerous to maidenly purity than the den of shame which assailed only to illustrate the virtue of Agnes. True to her soul and her Saviour, the Christian maiden wins to her brow a radiance which, instead of being dimmed by marriage, is rather brightened by the affections of the wife and the sacrifices of the mother into the aureola of the saint.

CATHARINE OF ALEXANDRIA.

BY THE REV. M. P. PARKS, D. D.

"To collect a portfolio of prints after the old masters," says Mrs. Jameson (speaking of engravings chiefly of sacred subjects), "would be an amusing, and, I think, not a profitless, occupation. It could not be done in the right spirit, without leading the mind far beyond the mere pleasure of comparison and criticism, 'to thoughts more elevate, and reasonings high,' of things celestial and terrestrial, as shadowed forth in form by the wit and the hand of man."

The design of the publishers of the volume, now in the hands of the reader, went beyond this. It was their purpose (as we have been given to understand), in providing for their patrons an annual gift-book for the holydays, not only to collect a portfolio of choice engravings, of sacred subjects exclusively, but one that should serve to illustrate the lives and characters of some of the most eminent persons that have lived and suffered and died for the Christian faith — to give to such a collection a *permanent* form, and to multiply copies of it, till it should be within the reach of all who can afford to gladden

the Christmas fireside of Christian friends with a presentation-book. The design appeared to us so deserving of encouragement, that when applied to by the esteemed editor, to contribute somewhat to its accomplishment, we did not feel at liberty to withhold our mite. The character assigned to our unpractised pen was that of *St. Catharine of Alexandria.*

But here, on the threshold of our undertaking, we imagine the unsentimental reader and all the "it won't pay" class obtruding upon us the question, "What interest is there for us in the story and fortunes of one, whose history is overlaid with so much that is fabulous, and with whose *extravagant* devotion at best, the enlightened Christian of the nineteenth century can have little sympathy?" To this it might suffice to reply in the words of the authoress before quoted: "If we go back to the *authentic* histories of the sufferings and heroism of the early martyrs, we shall find enough there both of the wonderful and the affecting, to justify the credulity and enthusiasm of the unlettered people, who saw no reason why they should not believe in one miracle as well as in another." Now although there is, of course, no merit in believing that which is not true, yet, since it is a fact, that the wildest part of those fictions with which later ages have clothed the "acts" and sufferings of saints and martyrs, have some basis of truth to rest on, their story, so far as it does not contradict historic probability, may be read and pondered with profit. Those much abused legends which took possession of the popular mind, between the seventh and tenth centuries, and to which the monks of succeeding ages gave shape and coloring, truly reflect the character of those holy men and women. And it is not their weaknesses, but their patience, their heroism, their chastity, their learning in some instances, and their unbounded charity in many, that they recommend to our admiration and love. Why then should we read the historic novels of Sir Walter

Scott, not for the history which they teach, but for the sake of the vivid impressions which they convey of the times and the characters, in the midst of which his heroes lived and moved; and yet turn away with cold disdain, from the contemplation of those *heroic* and *saintly* personages, whose lives have illustrated and will for ever illustrate, the annals of the Christian church, despite the real extravagances of a St. Anthony or the fabled burial of a St. Catharine, by angelic mysteries?

"We live," says the poet, "through admiration, hope, and love." A sentiment not less abidingly true, than poetically just and beautiful. Nor can it be doubted, that out of these profound aspirations of the human heart arose that intense love of legendary lore, despite its extravagances, which, in the absence of any higher literature and any better teaching, was the sole element of mental as well as moral culture vouchsafed to the three or four centuries which preceded the revival of letters. And amidst that universal chaos which ensued between the breaking up of the old pagan forms of society and their reconstruction upon a Christian basis; when *might* was the sole test and limit of right; when all the better feelings of man's nature were outraged at every turn; when the *weak* had no refuge to which they could flee from the oppression of the strong; when home was stripped of its sanctity, and chastity could no longer appeal for its protection to the conscience of him who would violate it — in that dread era of triumphant misrule, how apparent the interposition of the Almighty, who, while his downtrodden creatures were slowly reconstructing that society which their own sins had overturned, did not utterly forsake them, but graciously preserved to them that which in their feebleness and blindness they could still take hold of, and staying themselves upon which, they could still defy the fury of the oppressor! Does any one ask what was this prop? I answer, the legendary story of the patient endurance, the heroic faith, and the certain triumph of

that vast company of men and women, of like passions with ourselves, who, "after they had suffered awhile," were recompensed with the martyr's crown, and the saint's reward. In these traditions of the heroic ages of the Church, they had illustrations, proofs, guarantees without number, that this life is not the whole of man's being; that sufferance is more dignified than resistance; that poverty and toil are more honorable than guilty abundance; that the loftiest heroism is that which conquers self; and the truest courage, that which welcomes shame and rebuke, when inseparable from a good conscience. Whatever therefore of evil influence may be attributed to the legends of the "dark ages," as fostering an over-credulous spirit in the common people, thus much of good, at least, it must be conceded, they accomplished in behalf of that always numerous and needy class. Besides, whatever God has permitted to exist in the past, is, whether we will or no, the heritage of the present — ours for example or warning; the foundation on which to build that which is better and truer. And "as after the siege of Troy" (says the profound and eloquent author of the History of Civilization) "there were found, in every city of Greece, men who collected the traditions and adventures of heroes, and sung them for the recreation of the people, till these recitals became a national passion, a national poetry; so, at the time of which we speak" (the period immediately antecedent to the revival of letters), "the traditions of what may be called the heroic ages of Christianity had the same interest for the nations of Europe. There were men who made it their business to collect them, to transcribe them, to read or recite them aloud, for the edification and delight of the people. And this was the only literature, properly so called, of that time." And, I will add, the only moral culture. For, not then as now was there an open Bible, and the preached word. And these circumstances in our favor, while they secure us against that too credulous

spirit which is the handmaid of superstition, leave us without excuse if we do not profit by the records of that faith and patience, in the exercise of which the children of God in every age have glorified the Giver of all good. It will always be an impressive fact in the world's history, however we may pass it by unheeded, that in every generation there have been holy men and women, who have lived above the world; conquered themselves, had their conversation in heaven — who, poor themselves, made many rich, and, when their work was finished, accounted it gain to die! The recorded triumphs of these spiritual combatants is one of those providential methods which God has been pleased to employ to make good his promise, that "the righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance;" and he is not wise, who, through fear of becoming over-credulous, turns away from these memorials, and for the sake of becoming critical, is content to remain cold.

As it is not my intention, however, to trespass upon the reader's patience by inserting here any lengthened account of the life and "acts" of St. Catharine (albeit, it is a storehouse of much that is picturesque and moving in sacred art), there is no need that I should attempt any labored vindication of the received account of her birth, virtues, and heroic end; and more especially is this uncalled for, since the *substance* of that which in the "Legendario Romano" is expanded into several folio pages, concerning the "acts" of this blessed saint, has been endorsed by Eusebius.* For although he does not mention her by name, yet the learned are agreed that there was no other Alexandrian, in that age, to whom his noble testimony applies in all its parts but St. Catharine. Suffice it to say, that of all the female saints, next to Mary Magdalene, St. Catharine is the most popular. Even in the reformed calendar of the English Church, she still retains her day (25th of Nov.), and over all England churches

* Lib. viii. c. 14.

and institutions, founded in memory of her heroic virtues, still retain her name. Venerated by the men of olden time as the patroness of learning, she was no less regarded by the women as the type of female intellect and eloquence, as well as of courageous piety and chastity. She was looked to as the inspirer of wisdom and good counsel in time of need — the Minerva of the heathen, tempered and refined by the graces of the Christian saint.*

In the original oriental legend, the locality assigned for the story of St. Catharine was, at least, well-chosen, and with a view to probability. Alexandria, famous for its philosophical and theological schools, produced not one, but many women, who, under the tuition of Origen and other famous teachers, united the study of Greek literature with that of the prophets and evangelists; some of whom, also, suffered in the cause of Christianity. But none of them, though greatly distinguished for their learning, fortitude, and piety, have challenged the respect and admiration of past ages like St. Catharine. Born in one of the most opulent cities of the East, about the period in which its fame had reached the culminating point, and descended from one of the noblest families of Egypt, fortune seemed to lay at her feet every advantage which birth, intellect, and wealth could boast.

Added to these, grace made her a vessel of honor, even from her infancy. In compliance with her father's wishes, indeed, who provided her with the best masters, she gave herself up to the study of science and letters. "She drank," says an old author, "so plenteously from the well of wisdom, that at the age of fifteen there were none comparable to her in the learning and philosophy of the Gentiles." And, although she could discourse intelligibly of "sines and co-sines, and

* See Mrs. Jameson's skilful and interesting abridgment of the "Legendario Romano," "*Sacred and Legendary Art*," vol. ii. p. 87.

fined ratios," yet the works of Socrates and Plato were her favorite studies, and these prepared her to receive a higher and purer doctrine; so that, ere she had attained to womanhood, she was even more remarkable for the spotless purity of her manners, and the simplicity and godly sincerity of her conversation, than for her store of learning. It was about this time that the emperor Maximin, or Maxentius, coming to Alexandria, and "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples," commanded them, on pain of the severest tortures, to worship the gods. St. Catharine however, refusing to comply, boldly confronted the tyrant with arguments in favor of the Christian religion, and so astonished was he by her fervid eloquence, as well as touched by her youth and beauty, that, pausing in the work of slaughter, he convened the wisest men within reach, and commanded them to silence her by argument. But in vain did these learned disputers of the world "try conclusions" with this unterrified witness for the truth. Silenced and convinced by her, whom, in the first instance, they had encountered with ill-concealed disdain, they acknowledged themselves converts to that faith which they had labored to destroy, and shrank not from the martyrdom which awaited them.

But the author of their conversion was reserved for a more cruel death than had yet been invented. The enraged emperor, failing to make the slightest impression upon her mind, either by threats of torture, or overtures to share his throne with her upon condition that she would sacrifice to the gods, ordered four wheels to be constructed, and armed with knives, and so arranged, that when his victim should be placed between them, their counter revolution should cut her in pieces. But whether her life was taken away by this cruel device, or whether, as some relate, she was miraculously delivered from it, and afterwards beheaded, all accounts agree that after a brief career, passed in untiring devotion to the cause of sound learning, and self-

denying charities for the relief of her sex, and for their advancement in whatever tends to purify and adorn the character of woman, she met death with heroic firmness, and exchanged, without one lingering regret, the sorrows of earth for the joys of Paradise.

Such, stripped of all historic improbability, is the brief story of the life and death of one of the loveliest of female worthies that ever witnessed to the power of the cross, and by it was crucified to the world.

And now, who that "has not yet attained, neither is already perfect," would willingly deprive himself of the benefit of her bright example, by withdrawing himself from spiritual communion with such, of whatever age, or name, or clime, because not sympathizing with them in every feature of their Christian life? Has not God "knit together His elect in one communion and fellowship in the mystical body of His Son?" And (slightly accommodated) does not the language of a distinguished senator, in reply to one scarcely less distinguished, rise spontaneously to the lips of a Christian man, while recounting "the glorious company of the apostles, the goodly fellowship of the prophets, and noble army of martyrs?" "The eulogium," said one, who requires none to name him, "the eulogium pronounced upon the character of the State, for her revolutionary and other merits, meets my hearty concurrence . . . . . I claim part of the honor, I partake in the pride of her great names. I claim them for my countrymen, one and all. The Laurences and Rutledges, the Pinckneys, the Sumpters, the Marions — Americans all — whose fame is no more to be hemmed in by State lines, than their talents and patriotism were capable of being circumscribed within the same narrow limits. In their day and generation they served and honored the country, and the whole country; and their renown is of the treasures of the whole country." This eloquent reclamation, glowing as it does with patriotic

fervor, when translated into a Christian tongue, and applied to the saints of the Most High, is as orthodox as it is patriotic. And so we too may say, the St. Catharines, the St. Cyprians, the St. Ephraims, the St. Ambroses, the St. Augustines, are our brethren in the bonds of Jesus Christ. In their day and generation they served and honored the Church, and the whole Church; and their renown is of the treasures of the whole Church. And for one I heartily thank the editor and publishers, for having done so much to introduce so many of that goodly company to the public of the nineteenth century, and to *naturalize* them in this new world; for having presented them in a dress so becoming, and in colors so lifelike. May their memories long linger with us, and their names be "as ointment poured forth."

HELENA, THE MOTHER OF CONSTANTINE.

BY REV. N. MURRAY, D. D.

Constantine, surnamed the Great, holds a conspicuous place among the heroes of history. The son of Constantius Chlorus, he was born, as is supposed, in Nissa, in the year 272. Trained to arms from his youth, he served with high distinction in the Persian war, under Galerius. Fearing for his personal safety, because of the jealousy of Galerius, he fled to Gaul just in time to join the army of his father, on his expedition against the Picts in Britain, when he was about thirty-four years of age. Chlorus died in 306, and his son immediately asserted his claim to a share of the empire. This claim was reluctantly acknowledged by Galerius, and with the title of Cæsar he became master of the country beyond the Alps. He took up his residence in Trêves, and governed his people with justice and moderation — loved by his subjects, and feared by his enemies. Soon, however, he became involved in wars with rival emperors, in all of which his arms were victorious; and by the decisive victory over Maxentius at Saxa Rubra, near Rome, he became sole master of the West in the year 312.

Soon after this, important events took place in the East. On the death of the tyrant Galerius in 311, Licinius and Maximinus divided his empire between them. Their clashing interests soon led them to war, in which Maximinus was defeated. The number of emperors was thus reduced to two, Licinius in the East, and Constantine in the West. Between these also a war commenced, which ended in the complete defeat of Licinius, in the two great battles of Adrianople and Chalcedon, and in his entire surrender, on the condition that his life should be spared. Thus Constantine became the sole master of the empire, when he transferred the seat of his government to Byzantium, which he called, after his own name, Constantinople, or the city of Constantine. Here he reigned in peace until his death, which took place in 337.

The character of this great man is very variously estimated by historians. If some would make him a great saint, others would make him a great sinner. The miraculous interposition of a cross in the air in his behalf, claimed by some, others would convert into an evidence that he was an impostor. Whether he was a Christian, or a heathen — a good man, or a bad one — whether his so-called conversion was an injury, or a benefit to the Church, are yet open questions, and are now no nearer settlement than they were hundreds of years ago. Yet the chivalry of his youth — his promptness in assuming the purple, as soon as it fell from the shoulders of his royal father — his victories over Maxentius — his moderation and justice in the West — his successful wars with Licinius — his going up, amid so many difficulties, to be the sole master of the Roman world — his tranference of the seat of empire from the West to the East — his founding of a great city, and locating it with so much sagacity — and, above all, his support of the religion of Christ, by converting the state from being its persecutor to its patron, give him a fair title to be called

"the Great," a term which all Christian history has cheerfully yielded to him.

The fame of the man has rendered posterity attentive to the most minute circumstances of his life, and especially to those which entered into the formation of his character. And as the conduct of a mother is influential, to a proverb, in the formation of the character of her children, the question arises, Who was the mother of Constantine, and what was her manner of life?

On these questions we also find the testimony of history at variance. It would seem as if she were a Briton by birth; but whether she was the daughter of king Coël, "who first built walls around the city of Colchester," or of an innkeeper, is not determined. Butler asserts her royal, and Gibbon her plebeian descent. She became the wife of Constantius whilst yet only a private officer in the army, and the mother of Constantine. When her son was about eighteen years of age, his father was promoted to the rank of Cæsar; which fortunate event was attended with her divorce, in order to make way for an imperial alliance with Theodora, the step-child of Maximianus. By this event Helena and her son fell into a state of disgrace and humiliation, from which they subsequently arose by the prudence, the justice, the ambition, and the military prowess of Constantine.

When, or by what means, she became a convert to the Christian faith is utterly uncertain. If some would represent her, in her state of divorce, as training up her son in the ways of religion, with the resignation and zeal of a Christian matron; others would represent her as a pagan until after the vision, or the dream, of seeing a cross in the air, which led to the so-called conversion of Constantine. We believe the truth in the case to be, that whilst her son played a double part to conciliate the Christian and pagan parties in the state, favoring less and less the pagan, and more and more the Christian,

until just previous to his death, he submitted to the rite of baptism; that at an advanced period of her life Helena became a devout Christian, and, in the way and manner of her age and country, a devotee to the cause which she espoused.

Hers was an age when the tendency was to the outward in the spirit of religion. The sensuous had already made vast encroachments on the spiritual, and the devotion claimed by God, and which should be given to the subduing of all the powers and affections to the obedience of Christ, was consecrated to pilgrimages to sacred places, to the collection of relics, and to the erection and adorning of churches. From all portions of the earth men flocked to the places where Christ was born, suffered, and was buried; princes made pilgrimages to the tombs of apostles and martyrs; pilgrims even penetrated Arabia to see the dung-heap, and to kiss the earth, on which Job had suffered with so much resignation. Helena fully yielded herself to this spirit of her times, and by her high example and patronage greatly promoted it. Honored by her son, and the wealth of the empire placed at her command, she devoted her rank and treasures to religious services. Assuming the plainest dress, she mixed with the people, was punctual in all her duties, distributed to the needy of her abundance, erected churches, and contributed largely to enrich and adorn them. When her son became master of the East, as of the West, by the conquest of Licinius, she repaired to Jerusalem, though then far advanced in life, and, as is said, discovered the true cross on which the Redeemer was crucified, laid the foundations of the church on the hill of Calvary, and manifested her zeal for religion by the most princely benefactions. Whilst travelling with royal pomp throughout the East, she yet displayed great condescension. She was kind and affable to all. She waited, as a servant, at the tables of the poor. The soldiers, the poor, the condemned, were every where the objects of her regard.

She returned to Rome, where she lived in the constant performance of acts of piety and charity, until her death, which occurred in August, 328; and her ashes are now said to be kept in a rich shrine of porphyry under the high altar of the Church of Ara Coeli in Rome.

Passing over the legends, mainly the productions of the dark ages, which narrate her finding of the true cross, the miracle which proved its truth, the wonders wrought by her intercession, which would seem to render her a fictitious personage, we are forced to the conclusion that Helena was a devoted Christian woman. What seems in her character more sensuous than spiritual was the result of the tendency of her age; and what seems in that character disjointed, and of monstrous proportions, and incredible, we must attribute to the imagination of those writers of legends, who sought to impress the living by the most unnatural and incredible narratives of the dead. Having embraced Christianity late in life, she sought to retrieve the many years spent in darkness and sin, by a consecration of her time, her station, her wealth, to the promotion of religion. And her name is embalmed by the entire Church of God, and is worthy of a place among those who have fought the good fight of faith, and laid hold of eternal life. The mother of Constantine is a bright star in that bright galaxy formed by the illustrious women of early Christianity, and whose characters should be held up to every age for the imitation of their sex.

MARY OF EGYPT.*

BY THE EDITOR.

"Like redeemed Magdalene,
Or that Egyptian penitent, whose tears
Fretted the rock, and moistened round her cave
The thirsty desert."

It would be an interesting question to consider whence and where arose the stories which we have of the saints and martyrs of early days. Some of them are confessedly of very ancient date, and in so far seem to have a kind of claim to credit at our hands; others — and this is the case with most of them — date no higher than the period when the monastic system flourished in all its vigor, and when, as is not unlikely, the inmates of convents and religious houses spent a portion of their time in writing down the floating traditions respecting the good and eminent of the days which preceded them. That they made additions and embellishments of various sorts, is tolerably certain, when it is considered that they had a fair field before them, and

* By an error of the engraver this and the following illustration are incorrectly designated: hence for "Eudoxia" and "Lydia," the reader will be kind enough to substitute "Mary of Egypt" and "Monica," respectively.

that virtually there was a premium on the best told story of some popular saint or martyr. An uncritical age and prevailing ignorance, combined with the inherent tendency in the human race to hero-worship and the admiration of saints, would, naturally enough, lead to the adoption of highly colored legends, marvellous stories, and touching narratives of illustrious Christian heroes, and saints, and martyrs; more especially, too, would this be the case, when some popular religious practice or tenet was favored by the new legend, and it was shown by an example how holy and pure was the life of some female saint, renouncing the world and vowing herself to perpetual chastity and solitude; or some holy anchorite withdrawing himself from all communion with his kind, and hiding himself in a cave or hole in the earth, to contemplate ever upon the goodness and perfections of God. And thus, these pretty stories would — as they did — speedily gain applause, and soon become an integral portion of the ecclesiastical literature of the age, — thanks to the extra leisure and powers of imagination of the monks and such like folks of old!

In point of historic value, it must be confessed, that the legends of the saints are well-nigh worthless. Rarely is there a single well-authenticated fact respecting most of them, except that they lived somewhere about the time assigned them, and probably in the places with which their names are connected. The monastic chronicler or romancer, having only a few real facts to go upon, was of necessity compelled either to manufacture circumstances not inconsistent with the truths already in his possession, or to gather up such traditions as may have been currently reported respecting the hero or heroine whose life and career he wished to illustrate, and hand down to the admiration of mankind. If he had been confined to a relation of the facts certainly known, and those only, his account would have been meagre indeed, and with the exception of the few illustrious men and women of

whom we have contemporaneous records, he would have had nothing to say, unless it be that such a saint or martyr lived at such a date, and in such a place, and that the veracious historian can find no traces of reliable accounts of his or her life and actions. But this would not have answered at all, and the mediæval Church teachers would not have had any glowing legends to tell of and substitute, in the services of religion, in the place of the pure Word of God: in such a case, too, the hold which was obtained over the people could never have been kept secure, and the personal consequence of the monks and nuns, of all sorts and descriptions, would have been very much less than it was, when for every tenet and practice and notion of theirs, or their orders, there was a legend to impress it upon the people, and render it sacred in their eyes.

It is hoped by the writer of the present article, that these general remarks and statements may not be deemed without their value, as introductory to the history of Mary of Egypt, a personage of whom we know little or nothing, but of whom there is legendary lore in considerable abundance. The few facts, such as they are, we shall give of course; the additions or improvements or embellishments of those who have put the story in its present shape, we shall give also; and we hope that the reader will receive them as of equal value with any professedly fictitious narrative of persons and times long gone by. He may believe, if he choose, that such and such things *may* have happened, and he may read the story of Mary's life with as much interest as he pleases, recollecting that what is told of her and her career is not presented to him as truth, but only as a legend or instructive story of the past, containing, doubtless, some truth, but more fiction.

Mrs. Jameson, to whom we are indebted, principally, for our notice of Mary of Egypt, informs us that there is a very ancient tradi-

tion, supported by contemporaneous evidence, "that a female anchorite of the name of Mary, lived and died in a desert of Palestine, near the river Jordan—and that she there bewailed her sins in solitude, for a long course of years, and was accidentally discovered;" but more than this we do not know. All the details, the romance, the pathos, the marvels, the miracles, and what not, with which the legend now appears, have been added by some lover of the saints. The naked facts, by themselves, are of little interest; and "St. Mary of Egypt" would never have attained any eminence among holy women had the facts alone been all that was presented to the devout admirers of the faithful and illustrious of earlier days; dressed up, however, adorned and embellished with not a little skill and insight into human nature, and attributed to no less a person than St. Jerome, who is made to tell the present legend, what wonder is it if the facts, few and unimportant as they are, assume a life, and earnestness, and point, which seize the attention, and enlist the sympathies of the pious worshipper? None at all, we answer; the wonder would be if so pretty a legend, professedly coming from so distinguished a writer, did not make a deep impression upon both the memory and the heart. Let the reader judge; let him recollect the few facts above given, and how pointless and uninteresting they are, simply of themselves considered, and how truly they tell the story of thousands of similar anchorites in olden times, and then let him read what follows, and see what distinctness and significance the life and actions of Mary of Egypt present to the mind, under the plastic hand of the legendary writer, from whom the story is quoted. We copy it from Mrs. Jameson.

"Toward the year of our Lord 365, there dwelt in Alexandria a woman whose name was Mary, and who in the infamy of her life far exceeded Mary Magdalene. After passing seventeen years in every species of vice, it happened that one day, while roving along the sea-

shore, she beheld a ship ready to sail and a large company preparing to embark. She inquired whither they were going? They replied that they were going up to Jerusalem, to celebrate the feast of the true cross. She was seized with a sudden desire to accompany them; but having no money, she paid the price of her passage by selling herself to the sailors and pilgrims, whom she allured to sin by every means in her power. On their arrival at Jerusalem, she joined the crowds of worshippers who had assembled to enter the church; but all her efforts to pass the threshold were in vain; whenever she thought to enter the porch a supernatural power drove her back in shame, in terror, in despair — (It is this point in the legend which the artist appears to have chosen in the annexed illustration.) — Struck by the remembrance of her sins, and filled with repentance, she humbled herself and prayed for help; the interdiction was removed, and she entered the church of God, crawling on her knees. Thenceforward she renounced her wicked and shameful life, and, buying at a baker's three small loaves, she wandered forth into solitude, and never stopped or reposed till she had penetrated into the deserts beyond the Jordan, where she remained in severest penance, living on roots and fruits, and drinking water only; her garments dropped away in rags piecemeal, leaving her unclothed, and she prayed fervently not to be left thus exposed; suddenly her hair grew so long as to form a covering for her whole person, or, according to another version, an angel brought her a garment from heaven.

"Thus she dwelt in the wilderness, in prayer and penance, supported only by her three small loaves, which, like the widow's meal, failed her not, until, after the lapse of forty-seven years, she was discovered by a priest named Zosimus. Of him she requested silence, and that he would return at the end of a year, and bring with him the elements of the holy sacrament, that she might confess and communicate before she was released from earth. And Zosimus obeyed her,

and returned after a year, but not being able to pass the Jordan, the penitent, supernaturally assisted, passed over the water to him; and having received the sacrament with tears, she desired the priest to leave her once more to her solitude, and to return in a year from that time. And when he returned he found her dead, her hands crossed on her bosom. And he wept greatly; and looking round, he saw written in the sand these words:—'O father Zosimus, bury the body of the poor sinner, Mary of Egypt! Give earth to earth, and dust to dust, for Christ's sake!' He endeavored to obey this last command, but being full of years, and troubled and weak, his strength failed him, when lo, a lion came out of a wood and aided him, digging with his paws till the grave was sufficiently large to receive the body of the saint, which being committed to the earth, the lion retired gently, and the old man returned home, praising God who had shown mercy to the penitent."*

Such is the legend of Mary of Egypt, a legend not without its point, and well calculated to make a strong impression upon the imaginations of those for whose benefit it was first composed. On some accounts we are not well pleased with being a party to the circulation of matter which professes to be a true narrative of past events in the life and career of one of the saints of old, but which, in reality, is without any solid foundation in truth; for various reasons, loving, as we do, the truth above all things, we would prefer to speak only of those matters and of those persons which history has set her seal upon as worthy of confidence; still, however, we entertain the hope that a legend, such as that above narrated, may not be without its value even at the present day. With this hope, we beg the reader's attention a while to the consideration of at least one lesson which may be learned from the history of the Egyptian penitent.

* Mrs. Jameson's "*Sacred and Legendary Art*," p. 227.

Mary of Egypt, in the earlier part of her career, belonged to a class which, to the lasting disgrace of humanity is, as it always has been, far too numerous in the community; a class, too, on which society now looks with scorn and detestation, and for which no hope is ever held out of restoration to favor and confidence. The pure and irreproachable chastity of the sex is all-essential to the fair fame of woman; and when once it is lost, there is no place left for repentance, though it be sought with tears and lamentations night and day. The voices of all are raised against her who has been guilty of the foul crime of adultery, no matter what may have been the circumstances, what the temptation, what the intricate and detestable scheming and plotting — alas, too successfully — for her ruin. The good name of our wives and sisters, the sacredness of those bonds which bind together father and daughter, husband and wife, brother and sister, all force us to cry out against that crime especially which fixes an ineffaceable stain upon the fallen and degraded one. She is at once cast out; the finger of scorn is pointed at her; the good and pure turn away with sorrow and hopeless grief, or with loathing and disgust; the man of the world and the ungodly take occasion to try and sink her still deeper in sin and impurity, and rather than forego the gratification of their sensual passions and desires, shed not one tear, breathe forth not one sigh for the degraded one, and offer not a single inducement to her to pause on the brink of that gulf of dark and terrible remorse and despair. The ruined one sees before her naught but infamy; not a gleam of hope ever crosses her path that she can return to that position which she has lost; and driven out to herd with the vile, what wonder is it that she rushes headlong into crime, and becomes habitually an instigator of and partaker in those foul orgies which we dare not let even be once named among us, lest we call up the blush of shame and humiliation that our nature is capable of such deep degradation. The

seducer may walk the earth as proudly as ever, and even where it is known that he has broken the law of God, his offence is visited upon him but lightly; it is counted a venial offence; and he finds little or no trouble in maintaining his place in society, or his fair fame in the community. But not so with his victim. She cannot, by putting on a bold face, and making light of her sin, brave the scorn and contempt of society. She cannot laugh at the crime she has committed, and thereby regain the confidence and respect of the virtuous, the pure, and the good. She cannot go in and out, and claim the support, the sympathy, the affection of those who are her natural protectors, and the guardians of her honor and good name; no, virtually, if not really, she is a perpetual outcast; and, as society never forgives this crime against itself, so she who falls, falls to rise no more.

Such, as our readers know, is the light in which, at the present day, the sin of adultery in a woman is regarded. Whether it be right or not so to regard it; whether it be most in accordance with the spirit of the Gospel to visit with such stern punishment the violation of this one of God's commandments, while the breaking of others is looked upon as a comparatively light matter; or, whether it be that there ought to be some ray of hope left for the fallen one, that she might, perhaps, rise again, and might, at some day or other, after a long and bitter course of penitential discipline, be admitted again to a place among the chaste and pure, who have never sinned in this way;— whether, we say, the views, and feelings, and course of the community on this subject be right or wrong, expedient or inexpedient, is not a question which we feel at liberty to discuss here. The fact is, doubtless, just as it has been stated above; and we have dwelt upon it rather fully because of what we conceive to be the lesson which should be learned from the career of Mary of Egypt.

That she was a grievous sinner the legend most distinctly states;

that she was a devout and sincere penitent it also states. She sinned and fell; but though she lived in sin and vileness for years and years, yet she was not permitted to sink into despair; she repented and forsook sin, and was pardoned by Him who came to save lost and perishing sinners. She lived a chaste and pure life ever afterwards, and God was pleased not only to pardon but also to bestow upon her His favor and special marks of His goodness and grace. The good and pure did not hate and despise the penitent Mary; they did not pursue her with scorn; they did not treat her as a condemned outcast; they did not suppose that she was for ever to be excluded from all intercourse with the virtuous of either sex; nay, penitents of this description, in the earlier days of the Church, were treated with a leniency and gentleness which we should probably deem misplaced; and so far from their being looked upon as fallen to rise no more, they were supposed often to attain to higher degrees of God's favor, because their repentance for their grievous sin was deeper and more fervent than that of those who had never violated this particular one of the pure and holy commandments of God. May not *we*, then, who live in these latter days, derive some instruction from legends which indicate the spirit our elder brethren in the Church were moved by with regard to degraded and fallen women? Ought we not to learn a lesson of charity and kindness towards them? Why should we not open wide the church's doors for their admission, and let them see that penitence and faith in Christ will obtain pardon for even the vilest sinner? O Christian man or woman, whoever thou art, crush not the degraded and hopeless; break them not down utterly. Christ's Gospel *can* raise them up. The most grievous offender *can* be heard, if he plead the merits of Jesus' sacrifice; and if the murderer, the profane, the robber, the thief *can* come to Him who casts out none who cry to Him for help and pardon, surely the adulteress ought not to be

deprived of all hope of acceptance. The Lord Jesus, when they brought before Him a woman taken in the very act of committing this crime, did not pronounce judgment against her so that she should be stoned to death for her offence against His law; go, was the solemn injunction of the Saviour to the woman, "go and sin no more." Let us follow His footsteps and drink in of His spirit, and we shall ever be compassionate towards the fallen. And more, we shall not fail to do what in us lies to excite in others sentiments of pity for the degraded, who like Mary have sinned, and like her too have repented and done works meet for repentance.

MONICA.

BY THE REV. WILLIAM ADAMS, D. D.

WELL might Ambrose congratulate Augustine because *he had such a mother!*

There she stands in the anguish of her heart, sorrowing over her son when, as yet, he was incorrigible. The prayer is even now upon her lips, which she offered so often — "OH GOD, CONVERT MY SON." Yet it is not blank despair which is on her face; hope is blended with her grief, else she could not have prayed at all.

Cicero has observed that it was the consummation of all literary injustice not to mention the *instructors* of distinguished men. How much more unjust not to record and honor the names of their *parents;* especially when the virtues of those parents were obviously the occasion of all the renown which is rendered to their offspring.

All who are read in history are familiar with the name of Augustine, the illustrious Rhetorican, Preacher, and Theologian. If fame is to be valued by the extent and perpetuity of one's opinions, few have ever reached such an enviable immortality as the renowned bishop of Hippo. Active and energetic in the religious controversies of his own

day, his voluminous works have been quoted as authority on divers points by Papal Councils, by Jansenists and Jesuits, and by every branch of the Protestant Church. This is not the place to discriminate and judge as to the correctness of his opinions. All will admit that he was a man of rare accomplishments, and vast influence. Ardent, bold and brilliant, the symbol by which the old pictures represent him is a *flaming heart*, with this inscription—UNDE ARDET, INDE LUCET.

Of Patrice, the father of Augustine, little more is known than that he was a reputable citizen of Tagaste, a small city in Africa, during the reign of Constantine. Of MONICA, his mother, Augustine himself has recorded many things in his own remarkable confessions; and to her he appears to have been indebted for the most distinguished qualities of his character. The city in which they lived was Pagan; but the parents of Augustine were Christian converts at the time of his birth, which occurred A. D. 354. Desirous of enriching him with the best education, his parents afforded him every facility for intellectual improvement; but their son evinced no fondness for study. At the age of sixteen he was sent to Carthage to prosecute the study of rhetoric; but here he plunged into dissipation. Charmed with pagan eloquence, more than with the simplicity of the Scriptures, he attached himself to the sect of the Manichæans, and became a zealous supporter of their dogmas. Returning to Tagaste, he gave instruction in rhetoric, with so much applause, that many congratulated his mother upon his brilliant prospects. But this holy woman never ceased to deplore the heresy of her son, his thoughtless gayety, and reckless dissipation. When he returned to Carthage, and became famous in that brilliant capital, his mother followed him, and by every gentle persuasion, endeavored to detach him from his career of vice. Despairing not, even when all her efforts seemed ineffectual, her ceaseless prayer still was—"OH GOD, CONVERT MY SON."

From Carthage, Augustine goes to Rome. Careful was he not to inform his mother of his intention, lest she should dissuade him from resorting to that theatre of metropolitan luxury and vice. But the prayers of MONICA followed her son across the sea; and her sighs to God proved more for his guardianship than her bodily presence. Attracted by the fame of Ambrose at Milan, Augustine goes thither to listen to the eloquence, rather than the piety, of that renowned preacher. Timid, because of the manifold temptations to which her son was exposed in the Roman Empire, and hopeful of little good on his account in such a region, MONICA saw not as yet the wise and wonderful intentions of Providence concerning this object of her love and solicitude. The curiosity of the young rhetorician had now brought him into the presence of one of the most pious and eloquent fathers of the Church. A partial reform was the immediate consequence. Full of delight at the intelligence, MONICA hastened to join her son at Milan. She desisted not yet from her wonted prayer, "OH GOD, CONVERT MY SON." When agitated by doubt, and harassed by remorse, Augustine was hurrying himself now into solitudes, and now into crowds, the patient, persevering and hopeful mother was at his side, like a guardian angel, to counsel and to aid. At length the desire of her heart was accomplished. Augustine finds in the New Testament a better philosophy than any in the Hortensius of Cicero, and MONICA was permitted to see her son, renouncing his infidelity and his vices, baptized by Ambrose into the faith of Jesus Christ. His purpose is immediately formed to exchange the ostentatious life of a rhetorician for that of a preacher of the Christian Revelation. Full of joy, full of gratitude, mother and son commenced their journey to Africa, where the happy convert purposed to pass the remainder of his life. They reach the Mouths of the Tiber, and are waiting for a favorable wind. On a certain day, Monica and Augustine were seated at an open window, over-

looking a garden and the sea, and here they were conversing upon those things which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard," the glories of the eternal kingdom. They were now cemented by better affinities than those of consanguinity. The mother had rejoiced with the angels of God over the repentant sinner, and now she was ready to be joined to the angels in a perpetual society. She was too near the happiness of the angels to return again to the earth. Smiling on her converted son, bidding him to be of good cheer, and to sorrow not on her account, she fell asleep, and was buried at Ostia, in the year 387, in the 56th year of her age, her son being at that time 33. A happy consummation of a life of faith, patience and prayer. Her son was united to her by the hopes of the Gospel, and she left him just entering upon his blessed and brilliant career of Christian usefulness.

Wonder not that, over the lifeless remains of his mother, Augustine poured out his thanks to God for her wonderful fidelity as the chosen means of mercy to his soul. Strange indeed if, bereft of such a parent, he did not weep for one who for many years had wept for him. How are grief and gratitude, human sorrow and Christian hope, blended together in his own words on this memorable occasion — the interment of his own mother: "Premebam oculos ejus, et confluebat in præcordia mea mœstitudo ingens, et transfluebat in lacrymas, ibidemque oculi mei violento animi imperio resorbebant fontem suum usque ad siccitatem, et in tali luctamine valdè malè mihi erat. Neque enim decere arbitrabamur funus illud quœstibus lachrymosis gemitibusque celebrare, quia his plerumque solet deplorari quædam miseria morientium aut quasi omnimoda extinctio. At *illa nec misere moriebatur, nec omnino moriebatur.* Hoc et documentis morum ejus, et fide non ficta, rationibusque certis tenebamus. Psalterio respondebamus — MISERICORDIAM ET JUDICIUM CANTABO TIBI, DOMINE."

As an insect is embalmed in transparent amber, so is the life of

Monica, an humble and otherwise unknown person, preserved, for the world's admiration, in the fame and writings of her illustrious son. Let no Christian mother despair, however unpromising or profligate her child, while the example of Monica, the mother of Augustine, shines in its clear radiance to teach the impressive lesson of faith, fidelity and prayer.

GENEVIEVE.

BY THE REV. A. B. PATTERSON, M. A.

"Within your 'soul a voice there lives,'
It bids you hear the tale of woe;
When sinking low the sufferer wan
Beholds no hand outstretched to save,
Fair, as the bosom of the swan
That rises graceful on the wave,
I've seen your breast with pity heave,
And therefore love I you, sweet Genevieve."

COLERIDGE.

THERE are few things more remarkable in the history of popery than what we may call her omnivorous propensities and capacity. Nothing seems to come amiss to her appetite for power. The most unlikely elements yield her food, which she possesses a marvellous facility in assimilating. Heathenism, of all shades and aspects, has furnished materials which have been readily incorporated into her capacious system. In fact, there is a curious and a cunning eclecticism about popery which savoreth far more of earth than of heaven, and which goes far to account for the apparently large success which has often attended her missionary efforts. We might expect indeed that history would be found by Rome a difficult and an unyielding subject. But

when historical facts do not quite square with her purposes, she is not at all scrupulous in moulding and changing them to the required form and texture. In this way the ceremonies of barbaric and classic pantheism, artistic power, and historic truth, have been made to contribute to her plans and purposes; and have been modified and adapted to her gigantic system.

Rome may borrow from Olympus, or from Bramah, as much as she pleases. She may subsidize and degrade art to echo her dogmas and to stereotype her absurd anachronisms; but she cannot be permitted without exposure to touch and to tamper with historic truth. History is especially the ground on which popery is fain to tread with dainty steps and watchful eyes. She enters that domain with great reluctance. She cannot, dare not deal with its facts in their plain, unvarnished character. She must first give them a coloring of her own. The materials of history have by her to be newly-sorted and arranged and interpreted ere they are fitted for consumption. They must thus be brought into relation and *rapport* with her.

What sad work she makes with history, any one can readily perceive, who will take the trouble to examine the religious biographies of the fifth and sixth centuries. In fact, any one who has to examine them finds himself sorely perplexed. Fiction and legend have almost entirely supplanted truth and fact. Pretended miracles have been grafted upon the commonest incidents and experiences of Christian character. The simplicity and naturalness of an humble and holy life, have been marred and distorted by the accumulation of incredible and unnecessary supernatural interferences. And we should be utterly at a loss how to proceed, did not experience teach us that almost always there is a substratum of truth beneath the most monstrous aggregations of fancy, and that even popery cannot be convicted of an absolute disregard of historic facts.

These thoughts have been suggested by some researches into the life of Genevieve. We find it crowded with miraculous interferences, and sensible demoniacal assaults. The chief business, therefore, of the writer has been to endeavor to relieve it from those extravagant and invented features, and to extract from them the incidents and facts upon which they have been built.

Genevieve was born in the year of our Lord 421. Her birth-place was Nanterre, a village some twelve miles distant from Paris. Her parents were in humble life, and in straitened circumstances; and it required all their efforts to make provision for their family. At an early age their daughter was called to aid in earning her livelihood. She found employment with the neighboring farmers in assisting to watch their flocks. And thus her tender years were passed amid the scenes of pastoral life, and in discharging the simple duties of a shepherdess. No doubt the occupation exercised a strong influence in the formation of her character. It fostered habits of thoughtfulness and meditation. It brought into play feelings of kindness and gentleness and compassion. Among the Old Testament worthies, the men whom God selected to guide or to govern His people in important crises He seems previously to have prepared, by putting them through the duty and the discipline incident to a shepherd's life. It was thus with Joseph, and Moses, and David. There seems to be something in such an occupation naturally calculated to develope those qualities which fit men to be leaders and rulers — watchfulness, and care, and long-suffering, and a constant looking beyond self.

In the pursuit of such a life, therefore, we do not wonder to find the young Genevieve giving early evidence of the character which she sustained through a long life. When she was yet only seven years of age, she was noted for her humility and piety. The very counte-

nance of the child seems to have furnished an index of the gracious principles which were rooting themselves in the heart.

Her native village was one day thrown into considerable commotion by the unexpected visit of a man of God — Germanus the bishop of Auxerre. On his way to England, he stopped for a short time at Nanterre. France was, as yet, only partially Christianized, and ministers and bishops were not as numerous as they became in the following century. The visit of the holy man was an event in their little community. The people flocked eagerly around him to hear his words, and to receive his blessing; among them came the little Genevieve, eager but timid. The good bishop was struck with the reverend thoughtfulness and the genuine humility that spoke in her earnest countenance. And he predicted her future career of piety and beneficence. No doubt, the prediction, as in other cases, aided in bringing about its own accomplishment. The language of encouragement and approbation was a stimulus to the purposes and efforts of the young child, coming, as they did, from the lips of a chief pastor of the Church. At the same time he presented her with a token, humble indeed, but doubtless not the less prized, of his approval, and a memento of the expectations thus formed of her character. It is said to have been a copper coin, on which was the impression of a cross. From this period she gave further and stronger evidence of devotedness to God, and of the control which religious principles and motives exercised on her whole life and conduct.

Genevieve was not blessed in her parental relations: certainly her early piety was not the result, as is so often the case, of the instructions and prayers of her mother. Her home then does not appear to have been the abode of religion; and it was not by "line upon line, and precept upon precept," that her young heart was brought to surrender itself to its Creator. She had much with which to contend in

her own family; not from any direct opposition, but there was a want of sympathy, and there were harsh and violent outbreaks of temper on the part of her mother. She was a worldly woman, with a heart unenlightened by that Gospel whose light shone forth so beautifully in her child; and, as was naturally the case, the very contrast tended often to irritate her; the guilelessness of Genevieve's life would minister a silent but a constant reproach to her own. This at times roused feelings which vented themselves in something stronger than words. But the young disciple bore meekly and patiently the railing language and the angry blow of her mother; or "the soft answer that turneth away wrath" flowed submissively from her lips. And then, too, the daughter knew that there was a "more excellent way," and a more effectual way of contending with the evil nature of her parent; what patience could not do, prayer might. A darkness which the light of her own lovely spirit could not disperse might be scattered, if faith could open the way, and cause to come down radiations from on high. And therefore did the child, reversing the natural process, besiege the mercy-seat in behalf of her parent. We know that there is a mighty prevalence in the beseeching prayers which are poured from a mother's full heart in behalf of her child. But we do not know, because the case is one of far less frequent occurrence, with what unutterable groanings the spirit of the child wrestles at the mercy-seat in behalf of the ungodly parent. The time of that parent's probation may be short; the opportunities must be few; the resistance to be overcome is more settled and stubborn; and therefore do the pleadings go on with an untiring, an almost irresistible persuasiveness. It was under such impulses, and with such motives, that the faithful daughter waited in prayer upon her Father in heaven. And her beseechings entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. The patient cross with which she bore parental infirmities and wrath, might accomplish

something; but the faith which persevered, which said, "I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me," did more. It brought down the convincing Spirit to subdue and teach, and enlighten the mother's heart. And thus in the parent's conversion were furnished the elements of a holier love, and a truer and deeper sympathy.

As the young Christian grew in years, the promise of her early character was constantly fulfilling; kindness and beneficence seemed to be so completely her nature, that their exercise became the leading and absorbing object of her life. And therefore she sought a field wherever they might be more widely and effectually cultivated. With this view she removed to the city of Paris; here were objects sufficient for the largest action of her zealous piety. Here were already formed associations calculated to concentrate and systematize all charitable efforts. With one of these she connected herself.

Monachism was already, to some extent, established. But the principle of religious separation and seclusion in communities, had not been extensively applied among the female sex. It was a new thing, and as yet comparatively a simple thing. The early sisterhoods of charity and piety knew nothing of the harsh and unnatural features of austerity, and "voluntary humility and will-worship," which are so prominent in the convent systems of later and Romish periods of the Church. These things were slowly engrafted upon them. At first the religious societies of females were formed, and conducted with the utmost simplicity, and with entire absence of pretension. And they presented a field wherein ardent and devoted minds might find full scope for the play of all their activities and energies. Nevertheless, they contain the germ of evil which must sooner or later ripen. They will develope a self-righteous spirit. Their very separation will tend to make their votaries "think more highly of themselves than they ought to think." The name of *Pharisee* among the Jews im-

ported "separation;" and the result of the principle is "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men." Into such a religious association Genevieve entered; denying herself, if indeed in her case it were self-denial, all the sympathies and relations of domestic life, she gave herself up to the cause of the poor and the sick and the suffering. The city of Paris witnessed and appreciated the extent of her labors, and held her memory in religious and grateful remembrance.

At the same time the nature and the novelty of the religious society of which she was a member exposed their motives and efforts to suspicion and to misinterpretation. The time was gone when unbelief could persecute the body. But the ungodly could utter their insinuations against the consistency and propriety of a given line of conduct. And we can hardly wonder that with such Genevieve and her companions passed either for hypocrites or visionaries. It is the fortune of all earnest and ardent minds. They are not content to go in beaten tracks. And when they take leave of hackneyed and commonplace methods, they are usually supposed to be setting themselves up for better than their neighbors, and therefore to be self-righteous hypocrites; or if they receive credit for good intentions, they are suspected of having parted company with their good sense or their judgment. There was only one way to meet such charges, and this Genevieve pursued by the devotion and labor of a long life, by the production of those "peaceable fruits of righteousness" which are to the praise and glory of God.

There were some occurrences in her life which added greatly to the reverence and honor in which she was held by the inhabitants of Paris. Two of these stand forth with more prominence, inasmuch as they are connected with general history.

Attila the Hun, "*the scourge of God*," as he was pleased to call himself, was threatening western Europe. Already had the eastern

empire been overrun by his savage hordes. Now he was approaching the confines of France with an army flushed with conquest, and rendered confident by long-continued successes. What course he would pursue was quite uncertain. He might at once turn his forces upon Italy, and subduing the western capital, gradually extend his power over her dependencies. Or he might first bestow his attention upon the provinces, and leaving no enemy in his rear he might feel assured of ultimate success at Rome. Even should he fancy it the most politic course first to bring France under his yoke, still Paris was very far from being a position of the first importance. Indeed the possession of Paris hardly seems to have entered into the plans of the barbarian monarch. Paris was then France. There were several other cities of more commanding influence and far more likely to catch the eye of a conqueror. But the Parisians seem already to have had a prescience of their future greatness. At all events, they imagined their city the special cynosure of the invading monarch, and they left untried no means which might aid in changing his supposed purposes. In a season of impending danger the use and importance of piety became more highly prized. And men turned their thoughts to those who had "power with God." It was then that they bore their testimony to the value of a life of devotion and holiness. Genevieve and her companions were besought to offer special prayers for the preservation of their city. And accordingly they were unceasing in their petitions that heaven would be pleased to turn away from them the course of the invading army. When it appeared from his movements that Paris was likely to escape the attention of Attila, their preservation was naturally attributed to the effect of prayer. And the character of Genevieve rose proportionally higher, and the regard and respect entertained for her became more universal. Fear magnifies danger, and sometimes magnifies our own importance in view of danger. It

was probably largely thus with the Parisians. They saw the removal of a danger which to their fears appeared imminent, and prayer was the only means to which they could fairly attribute the removal of that danger. To the interposition of Genevieve, therefore, they gave the credit of the result. And they may have been right, though the case would rather seem to have been one of "*post hoc, propter hoc.*" At all events, it was the conclusion into which a simple-minded piety would naturally fall. And it is a blessed thing when our faith is so strong that we can see and recognize God's hand, even when to the human eye nothing but natural and necessary causes seem at work. It is a blessed logic when the heart can trace the cause and effects of piety and prayer, even when they may not square with the premises and conclusions of a human philosophy.

On another occasion Paris was suffering under the presence and infliction of a more terrible invasion. Famine, and its frequent follower, pestilence, encamped around her walls and marched through her streets and entered her palaces. The victims were, of course, mainly furnished from among the poor, from among those classes with whom Genevieve was most familiar through her ministrations of love. Their suffering condition awoke her liveliest sympathies, and called out all the power of her active and resolute spirit. Those who were able had fled and left the city to its wretched fate. That glorious progeny of Christianity, hospitals and almshouses, had not yet been called into existence. And the main dependence of the starving and the sick were the religious societies, then beginning to exert a considerable influence. The present demands, however, far exceeded any thing that they could supply in the way of charity and food. But they had trained willing hearts and active hands to the work of systematic benevolence, and that discipline was now justified in its fruits. It was just the field for an enthusiastic, energetic character like that of Gene-

vieve, chastened and modified by the pervading and controlling power of grace. The exigency demanded a commanding mind, accustomed to order and system in its movements—a mind which would not shrink from taking the lead and assuming the necessary authority, and capable, by the very force of character, of securing obedience to that authority. Genevieve was quite equal to the execution of such an undertaking. The neighboring resources were quite exhausted, and therefore supplies could only be procured at a considerable distance from Paris. For their transportation, the river furnished a natural and easy avenue, and it only required a united and systematic effort to render it available. By the orderly arrangements which Genevieve introduced, boats and men in sufficient numbers were soon procured, and dispatched up and down the river in search of the necessaries of life. In a short time, the starving citizens were released from their melancholy situation, and welcomed the regular and constant arrival of provisions to supply their wants. They came naturally to regard Genevieve as their preserver. For to her character, and conduct, their relief was mainly to be ascribed, and their tribute of gratitude was correspondingly warm and unmeasured. In the people's view, her success was quite as much the result of her prayers and piety, as of her active and energetic interference. We must not forget that the religion of the age was largely leavened by a superstitious element, a remainder of the heathen and idolatrous system not almost entirely abrogated. It seems a strange feature of the human mind that the votaries of false religions should be so generally credulous. And quite as strange is it, that just in proportion to the presence of error in any Christian system, will be found the tendency to an overweening and unquestioning credulity. We do not wonder therefore to find, that in a succeeding age the exploits of Genevieve were magnified into miraculous achievements, and herself elevated to the rank of a tutelary saint. Facts, we know,

gain by oral transmission. And in an age when the largest part of knowledge was communicated in this way, it hardly required a century to accumulate around the simple incidents of Genevieve's devoted life, all that is wonderful in the supernatural and the miraculous. Subsequently, when Popery had invented and perfected the machinery of canonization, Genevieve was raised to the rank of an intercessor, and became the patron-saint of Paris. Churches were erected in her honor, and though her celebrity was mainly of a local character, it has continued almost unimpaired among the Parisians, over whose city she is still supposed to maintain a watchful, although certainly not always a successful protection.

There are other scenes in French history with which her character and efforts are associated. When Childeric, the last heathen monarch of the Franks, who had been expelled his kingdom for his crimes and cruelties, returned and recovered his authority, Genevieve was largely instrumental in turning aside his revengeful purposes, and winning him to gentler counsels and a more peaceful life. Nor was her influence less with his son and successor, the renowned Clovis. His renunciation of idolatry and determination to become a Christian, was a result due in a considerable degree to her instructions and arguments. Clovis saw Christianity, as she lived it, and practised it, under an aspect in which it had never before presented itself. And her quiet and holy walk, and labor of love, commended her religion to him with a success which might have been wanting had he been attacked with evidences and external arguments.

We have spoken of Genevieve as a woman of an earnest and an ardent temperament. Such dispositions are modified, but not changed, by religion. They preserve measurably the same features, the same firmness in extremes, the same alternations of depression and exuberance, which they exhibited in their natural

state. Such temperaments are almost always exposed to a species of trial and temptation and struggle, superinduced by their mental and spiritual peculiarities. They have seasons of constitutional depression, which they are very liable to mistake for the actual withdrawal of Heaven's light and favor. They are beset by doubts and fancies often of so dark a character that their very souls seem to have suffered an eclipse, and the shadow of the valley to be stretching itself over their path without one ray of spiritual light to guide their devious steps. To a considerable extent this was Genevieve's experience. There were times when the light within her seemed to be darkness. Faith and hope appeared to be actually extinguished, or to beam with a faintness that showed only a spectre world of dismal and indefinite creation. From a morbid condition, where it seems thus the normal law of the natural life, not even religion can at once furnish relief. That comes with time and effort and struggle and prayer. To counteract and to neutralize such a state and tone, the active energies of the whole man must be called into exercise in a life of positive and laborious beneficence. Save for seasons of personal and private devotion, the mind must not be permitted to centre upon self, and to be ever analyzing its own fancies and feelings. The habit of introversion needs a constant and keen supervision; and when it is seconded by constitutional tendencies, it demands the strong counter-irritant of a life filled up with busy, active, laborious charities. It was thus that Genevieve was enabled to keep in subordination those morbid and sensitive features of her disposition which were constantly suggesting doubts, and raising fancied temptations, and threatening to shroud her character in an atmosphere of gloom and darkness. And labors of love, in ministering at the couch of disease and suffering, in drying the tears of sorrow, with her full and ready sympathy, in waiting upon the wants of the hungry and the naked, she learned to look out of

herself, and amid real and tangible difficulties and distresses to lose the sense and consciousness of her own. Thus she lived until self-denial became a second nature. This was not of that spurious kind which shrouds itself in the cloister or the cell, and under the influence of voluntary penances and austerities gains in spiritual pride what it loses in physical power and fleshly supremacy. This was the true mortification, which sinks self under every aspect; which looked "upon the things of others," and which brought glory to God, by manifesting most of "that spirit which was in Christ Jesus," when "He took upon Him the form of a servant."

Genevieve died at Paris in 506, at an advanced age, universally mourned by the community in which she had lived and labored, and spent and been spent.

BERTHA.

BY THE EDITOR.

"Hæc ergo cælestis civitas dum peregrinatur in terra, ex omnibus gentibus cives evocat, atque in omnibus linguis peregrinam colligit societatem; non curans quicquid in moribus, legibus, institutisque diversum est: quibus per terrena vel conquiritur, vel tenetur: nihil eorum rescindens vel destruens, imo etiam servans ac sequens; quod licet diversum sit in diversis nationibus, ad unum tamen eundemque finem terrenæ pacis intenditur: si religionem qua unus Summus ac Verus Deus colendus docetur, non impedit."—St. Augustine, "*De Civitate Dei*," lib. xix. c. 17.

It is not altogether easy to write of persons who flourished in the earlier centuries of the Christian era; and it is usually very unsatisfactory to not only the author but probably much more to his readers to attempt to sift out the truth amid the mass of chaff and fiction which constitutes the sources from which he is compelled to obtain the little that is known of more primitive times. So many causes work together to produce contrary effects; so many circumstances occur to modify or change entirely the usual results; there is so much in the civil history, its commotions and troubles, its struggles for absolute sway and its occasional overthrow, its gradual but sure progress towards despotism and the elevation of an aristocratic order; so much in the social condi-

tion of the times, of depression, and wrong, and outrage, on the one hand, and of wealth, and rank, and name, on the other; so much in the history of the Church, which held so important a place in the world then, even as it does now, and both acted with so much power upon it in its various relations, and was not without being acted upon by it to a greater or less extent; — there is so much in all these and such like things to prevent our getting a clear idea of persons, in their individual relations and career, that we think it must be granted, that it is by no means easy to write to one's satisfaction of either men or women who lived about the sixth or seventh century of our era. That the statement is not made at random a little consideration on the part of the reader will abundantly prove; we hope also, that it will be borne in mind under what difficulties a sketch of the present kind is prepared, notwithstanding the time and attention which have been bestowed upon it.

The period at which Bertha lived was an interesting as well as important one, especially for England, and her own connection with the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons gives her a prominence worthy of note. All will recollect the account given by Bede of the causes which led Gregory of Rome to manifest so deep a concern in the conversion of the pagan Saxons, and which induced him to spare no efforts after his elevation to the papacy, till he had succeeded in dispatching a competent and numerous band of missionaries on this great and noble expedition. It is not necessary, therefore, to enlarge upon these in this place; we shall, rather, ask the reader's attention to the providential circumstances which favored so materially the mission of Augustine, and no doubt aided essentially in bringing about the result which was attained. In this way, too, we shall most probably be able to get a tolerably clear insight into Bertha's character and position.

Aldeberga, or, as she is more generally termed, Bertha, was the daughter of Charibert, king of Paris. Her father is said to have been a man of voluptuous habits and feelings, a charge about which there does not appear to be much certainty. This, however, we know, that he was of a gentle and generous nature, the liberal patron of arts and literature, and distinguished for his proficiency in Latin. He appears to have bestowed much care upon the education of his daughter. The young princess was not only instructed in all the learning and refinement of the day, but was also thoroughly grounded in the principles of Christianity, and in her duties and responsibilities as a member of Christ's holy Church. The particulars of her early life are not preserved; but it requires no vivid imagination to picture to oneself the home and daily life of Bertha. Her father's court retained much of the old Roman civilization and refinement, and she herself had opportunity of becoming acquainted with events, and especially persons, which proved afterwards, in God's providence, of very considerable advantage to the cause of religion. Well-instructed in the principles of our holy faith, and, as we have every reason to believe, a sincere and devout Christian woman herself, it is not unlikely that Bertha felt a deep interest in the spread of the Gospel among the heathen. It was not long, too, before she was called upon to give most weighty consideration to the subject.

Owing to various causes there was at this time little or no rivalry, or hostile feeling, between France and Britain; "each had war enough at home to employ all its restless and turbulent strength; and neighborhood, therefore, led to an amicable intercourse, useful to both countries, but most so to Britain, which had preserved less from the wreck of its Roman civilization." It appears that the English nobles not infrequently visited France and the court of Charibert, and were entertained with that courtesy and consideration which equally became the

Frankish monarch and his distinguished guests. Probably among these visitors was Ethelbert, king of Kent, a man of high standing in his own country, and eminent for his ability as a statesman and warrior. Whether he were drawn to Paris by the reports of Bertha's beauty and queen-like qualities, or whether without any prepossessions in her favor he first learned to admire her in her own lovely home, is not recorded; but this is certain, that he made proposals of marriage, and was eager to transplant the beauteous rose of France to his fair kingdom in white-cliffed England. We may well suppose that Bertha listened with no little anxiety to the proposals of the Kentish king. She, as a Christian woman, could not lightly entertain any proposition which came from one who was no Christian, but was in the bonds of superstition and ignorance of the truth. It ill became her, who had been dedicated to God in holy baptism, and had herself recently taken upon her the vows and promises made in her name at her baptism, to think of becoming the wife of one who was a heathen, and neither knew nor cared aught about her duties and obligations to the Divine Redeemer. Could she be sure that he would treat her faith with even decent respect? Had she any reason to believe that she could be free from the sight of foul paganism and besotted idolatry? How could she know but that the king would seek to compel her to join in those things which were and are abhorrent to the soul of every follower of Christ Jesus? And yet, might she not hope that through her means God might be pleased to open the eyes of her intended husband, and so lead to the conversion of the whole nation to the true faith? Doubtless, these and such like considerations pressed deeply upon the mind of Bertha, when she knew that Ethelbert desired to make her his wife; and it seems no improbable supposition that she looked upon all this as a call from God to her to go forth and do what in her lay to evangelize the heathen. Whether so or not, she

determined upon her course, and entered bravely upon the work before her.

The proposals of the king of Kent were accepted, it being stipulated, however, on the part of Bertha, that she should be allowed to worship God in accordance with her convictions of duty to Him, and her solemn vows and promises which she had so freely made in her own name and behalf. She also stipulated that she should be permitted to bring with her a beloved instructor and guide, under whose spiritual direction she wished to continue. All the arrangements being happily effected, Bertha bade adieu to her father's court and her long cherished home, and became the wife of the king of Kent. It was a change of great moment to her in every respect. Not only had she left her father, her home, and her country, to become the inmate of a new home, and a queen over a strange people; but she had entered upon an entirely new state of life. She had become a wife, and her husband, amiable and excellent as he was in many respects, was not a disciple of the Lord Jesus, and it *might* be that he would become an active enemy to the truth, instead of being, as now, only an ignorant despiser of it. How much of wisdom and discretion did she need, how earnest must she be in prayer, how judicious in labor, how careful in every word and act, to commend the holy religion which she loved herself, and desired above all things that her husband also should love and obey. How wisely, too, must her daily life be regulated, and how strict a watch must she keep over her household, that through none of them might the truth be evil spoken of, or the prejudices of the people needlessly offended, by assuming to be their superiors, or manifesting a degree of contempt for their rudeness and want of cultivation and refinement.

Under the guidance of Luidhard, a bishop who consented to accompany her to England, Bertha did not fail to have the services of

the Church regularly constituted and performed. An edifice, a little way outside the walls of Canterbury, which had been built in the time of the Romans, was repaired, made fit for divine service, and dedicated to St. Martin of Tours, already an eminent saint in her native country. The company of clerical attendants in her train were duly installed in the posts assigned them, and though few listened to the strangers, yet it was not a little that a beginning was made, in the hope that God in his providence would ere long open the door for the spread of the Gospel over the whole kingdom. Nor was it long that the pious queen had to wait, before her prayers were answered for her husband and her people. The quiet, soothing, elevating influence of Christianity was not without its effect, even before any manifest tokens for good were vouchsafed. The king was no uninterested observer of what was going on; he saw what his queen was doing, and he could not but be struck with the marvellous effects which her religion had upon her, and which elevated her far above all her sex in heathen England. Hence he was not altogether unprepared for events which soon after came to pass; and he was, doubtless, open to the conviction which ere long forced itself upon his mind, that God in His wisdom and goodness had been preparing the way for the preaching of His Gospel, and the salvation of souls, through the atoning blood of the Redeemer.

It was only a few years after Bertha's marriage that she was gladdened by the news that missionaries were on their way to England. The earnest-minded Gregory I., bishop of Rome, was deeply interested in the attempt, which he himself had originated, to convert to the true faith the fair and beautifully formed Saxons. He dispatched Augustine, as we have before stated, with a large band of fellow-laborers to enter upon this work; and when, through some exaggerated reports of the ferocity and barbarism of the Anglo-Saxons, Augustine begged to be allowed to return, the benevolent bishop wrote to him

encouragingly, and urged upon him to remember that he could not now with any credit to himself give up the good work just begun, and that beside he should look to the greater glory and the crown which would be his, if he surmounted the obstacles in his path. Accordingly Augustine went on his way to England; and soon tidings came to the queen that he and his companions had already reached the shores of England. With great joy did Bertha listen to the good news, and most earnestly and affectionately did she press upon the king to receive with favor these messengers of good tidings. Ethelbert, nowise indisposed toward the religion which his wife professed, and with his mind prepossessed towards the monk Augustine and his companions, gave directions that they should be suitably entertained in the island of Thanet, until he could determine further. "Soon after," as quaint old Fuller relates the story, "Ethelbert repaired into Thanet; to whom Augustine made his address, *μετὰ πολλῆς φαντασίας*, 'with a deal of' spiritual, carnal 'pomp;' having a silver cross carried before him for a banner, the image of our Saviour painted in a table, and singing the litany on the way as they went. King Ethelbert desired all things betwixt them might be transacted in the open air, refusing to come under a roof, for fear of fascination. And, indeed, a stranger who had never seen the like before, beholding Augustine with such abundance of trinkets about him, being formerly jealous, might hereby have his suspicion increased, — that he went about some strange machination. However, Ethelbert returned him a civil answer; — 'that their promises were fair and good; but, because new and uncertain, he could not presently assent unto them, and leave the ancient customs of the English, which had been for so long time observed. But because they were strangers, coming from far countries, to communicate to him and his such things as they conceived were good and true, he would not forbid any converts whom their preaching could persuade

to their opinion, and also would provide them necessaries for their comfortable accommodation.'"* The king thereupon furnished them with a residence in the city of Canterbury, where they were maintained at the royal expense, and had entire liberty to preach the Gospel to whomsoever they would. The church of St. Martin was joyously placed at their service by the queen; and "here they lived so piously, prayed so fervently, fasted so frequently, preached so constantly, wrought miracles so commonly, that many people of inferior rank, and at last king Ethelbert himself, was baptized and embraced the Christian religion."

It needs not that we enlarge upon the progress of Christianity among the Anglo-Saxons, or the labors of Augustine in England. Every thing was favorable to success; the queen's well-known character and prepossessions; the recent conversion of the king; the building of churches; the increase of missionaries; and the earnestness and zeal of all concerned in the work, gave the promise of the rich harvest which ere long was gathered into the Church. Bertha had her reward; her prayers were answered; her efforts successful; and though she lived many years after the date of Augustine's mission, she saw only more and more how great was the goodness and mercy of God in allowing her to be the instrument in His hands to smooth the way, and, as it were, open the door for the preaching of His Gospel among the heathen Saxons. Happy was she in being counted worthy of so distinguished an honor! Happy was she, trusting in God's promises, to have her home a Christian home, and to see and know that her husband had been taken out of the darkness of pagan superstition and error into the marvellous light of the glorious Gospel of truth and purity!

Of the latter years of Bertha we have no distinct record. She

* Fuller's "*Church History of Britain*," vol. i. p. 84.

appears to have lived happily and peacefully, striving to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things, and waiting in hope and trust until she should be called away from earth to her final account. Ethelbert died A. D. 616, in the twenty-first year after he had become a Christian, and after a long reign of fifty-six years. "He was the first of all his race," says an old chronicler, "who renounced the errors of paganism, that he might obscure, by the glory of his faith, those whom he surpassed in power. This, indeed, is spotless nobility; this exalted virtue; to excel in worth those whom you exceed in rank. Besides extending his care to posterity, he enacted laws in his native tongue, in which he appointed rewards for the meritorious, and opposed severer restraints to the abandoned, leaving nothing doubtful for the future."* Bertha was taken away only a short time before her husband's death, and her mortal remains were laid in the porch of St. Martin's church in Canterbury: by her side, also, was buried the body of king Ethelbert. They had accomplished their work, and trusting in that Divine Lord and Saviour, who is our hope as well as theirs, they now wait—in paradise, may we not hope?—the last great day when we must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.

Let not the example of Bertha be without its due effect; and let those in high station try to imitate her in every good word and work, especially in promoting the spread of Christ's Gospel among all nations, and kindreds, and tongues, throughout the wide world.

* William of Malmesbury's "*Chronicle*," p. 12.

EBBA, ABBESS OF COLDINGHAM.

BY THE REV. GEORGE BENTON, M. A.

The name of one who lived in by-gone centuries, and that one a Christian, animated by the same hopes — supported by the same faith and the same divine grace — having much of the same trials and conflicts in the Christian life, and looking to the same source of help and strength — these simple facts fill the mind with many and serious thoughts.

None but the student of Church history can have any idea — and he even but a faint one — of the hardships and miseries to which the early Christians were subjected. In every part of the world they endured persecution, and felt the heavy weight of the arm of civil power in the attempt, from time to time, to extirpate them from the face of the earth. And Britain, the land of our forefathers, also felt the storm of persecution, and had her soil watered with the blood of the martyred sons of the Church.

The precise period in which Christianity was introduced into Britain is involved in some obscurity. Carefully balancing, however, all the evidence, it rather preponderates in favor of St. Paul, the great

apostle to the Gentiles. The several traditions in favor of St. James, Simon Zelotes, and Philip, are not supported by ancient testimony, and the tradition of St. Peter's having introduced Christianity into Britain is of too modern date. We feel compelled to withhold our assent also to the arguments which some writers have adduced to show that the conversion of Britain to the Christian religion is due to Lucius; for the proof usually adduced on this point is reconcilable with the supposition that Christianity had long existed in the country. It enters not, however, within our province to discuss this question. Among other names justly celebrated for learning and antiquarian research, may be ranked those of Camden and Usher, Stillingfleet and Cave, Gibson, Goodwin, and Rapin, who have closely examined the question, and to whose works the reader is referred for many and strong proofs of St. Paul's having been the founder of the British Church. Many causes may have contributed to hinder the rapid spread and growth of Christianity in Britain — such as their fond devotedness to their pagan superstitions, and the galling yoke imposed on them by their proud conquerors. But by the middle of the second century, or according to the venerable Bede, A. D. 156, considerable numbers must have abandoned the old idolatry, and embraced the Christian religion; for we find about this period Lucius, a king of Britain under the Roman government — for the country was then a Roman province — professing Christianity, and acting as a father and protector of the British Church. He is said to have sent to Rome two of the most learned men of the age for the purpose of being fully instructed in the doctrines of Christianity, and to consult with the bishop of Rome as to the best measures of promoting its more rapid extension. With them returned two messengers who presented to Lucius a letter from the bishop of Rome, containing these words — as quoted in Dr. Prideaux's Introduction to History — "You have re-

ceived into the kingdom of Britain, by God's mercy, both the law and faith of Christ. You have both the Old and New Testament. Out of the same, through God's grace, by the advice of your realm, take a law, and by that law, through God's sufferance, rule your kingdom of Britain; for in that kingdom you are God's vicar." Some historians are unwilling to allow that this application was made to the bishop of Rome on account of the well-known independence of the British Church on the Roman see; they think that the application was made to the Gallican Church. But the British, though in every respect independent of the Church of Rome, might yet have recourse to her, in difficulty, for counsel and advice, as one sister Church might to another, and especially as Britain was still a Roman province. The document in question is valuable in a historical point of view, as showing the existence and nationality of the British Church, her right to administer her own affairs without foreign intervention, and her independence of the Roman see. Christianity continued to increase and flourish in Britain, so that Origen could say, A. D. 230, that "the divine goodness of our God and Saviour is equally diffused among the Britons, the Africans, and the other nations of the world."

The reign of Diocletian, in the early part of the fourth century, was a check to the prosperity of the British Church. The persecution which commenced first in Nicomedia, under the reign of this emperor, extended into Britain, and many Christians were cruelly tortured and put to death. After ten years' continuance, this persecution ceased under Constantine Chlorus, and the British Christians came forth from their places of concealment, and rebuilt their demolished churches, and renewed the rites of Christian worship. As an evidence of the importance to which the Church had arisen at the middle of this century, we may observe that some of her bishops were present at Arles, A. D. 314; at the council of Nice in Bithynia, A. D. 326; at Laodicea,

in 347; and at Ariminum, in 359. It is said of the British bishops who attended this latter council, that they refused to receive the allowance granted them by the emperor; three of them only accepted it — a proof both of the number who were present, and of the wealth of the Church at this time.

Not long after this period, the Pelagian heresy distracted the British Church, and Germanus, or St. Germain, who passed over into Britain from Gaul, accompanied, in his first visit, by Lupus, and in his second by Severus, and who successfully refuted the Pelagians, advised the Britons to found monasteries, as places of study and of the cultivation of sound learning and theology. At this time may probably be dated the first introduction of institutions of this kind into Britain. He was instrumental in getting up several, and the noted monastery at Bangor, founded by the exertions of St. Germain, was a school of this description.

Troubles of a different kind were now beginning to obscure the horizon and cloud the prosperity of the British Church. No longer protected by the power of the Roman emperors, the country was overrun and oppressed by the Scots and Picts, who occupied the northern frontier. In their extremity, the suffering Britons resolved to invite over to their assistance the Saxons, A. D. 449, or, according to some, A. D. 499, and their allies finally became their conquerors. The Saxons, themselves pagans, and enemies to Christianity, destroyed the churches, slew the Christians, and hunted down the bishops and clergy as they would do the beasts of the forest. As the Saxons founded, one after another, their petty kingdoms, the Britons were compelled to seek safety — some in Brittany and others in Wales. After a long and ineffectual struggle, the whole of South Britain became established under seven Saxon kings, and was afterwards known by the name of the heptarchy, or seven kingdoms.

Towards the close of the sixth century, A. D. 596, Augustine, at the head of forty Benedictine monks, landed at Retsburgh, in the isle of Thanet. Their mission was the conversion of the Saxons. Ethelbert, the king, had married Bertha, daughter of the king of the Franks, who were then settled about Paris; and she being a Christian, it had been stipulated that she should be allowed the liberty of her religion, and the rites of Christian worship. For this purpose, therefore, she had caused one of the British churches to be repaired for her use, and dedicated to the honor of St. Martin of Tours, an eminent saint in her native country: and though this church has undergone many repairs during the lapse of succeeding centuries, yet the building itself and the name are still preserved. It stands a little distance out of the city of Canterbury, and it will command the respect and reverence of every Christian who knows its history, as the oldest of the Romano-British churches. The fact of Bertha being a Christian, and wife to the king, doubtless contributed mainly to the favorable reception which Augustine and his monks met with on their arrival. The British Church, though heavily oppressed, was not, however, destroyed. Many a priest emerged from his hiding-place in the glens and forests, took part in the conversion of his Saxon conquerors, and preached the glad tidings of the Gospel in that dark season of distress and oppression. And as a body, the British Church maintained a dignified position in the districts of Wales and Cornwall, and still kept her independent existence.

Having thus set up a landmark here and there in reference to Christianity in Britain till the landing of Augustine, a new era properly begins in its history. And approaching the time in which Ebba, or Æbbe, as it is sometimes written, the abbess of Coldingham, lived, we are admonished to turn our thoughts into a somewhat different channel. In the early period of what must now be

called the history of the Anglo-Saxon Church, in the seventh century, monasteries and convents began to be founded by devout and pious persons, and grants and gifts of property made to them; and scarcely a place of any note in England but is the site of some of these then venerable edifices. The state of society in those ages must have made those quiet and peaceful retreats appear to the pure and heavenly-minded Christian the abodes of rest — a refuge from the pelting storm of the world, almost the gate of heaven. Homes such as now bless and adorn the mother country were then unknown; rude and warlike encampments covered the country, and the castles, destitute of the comforts which are now found in the lowest cottage, were the constant scenes of brutal revelry and senseless mirth. What wonder, then, that holy matrons and virgins, who could estimate the purity of the Gospel character, and who shuddered at the scenes of vice they were compelled to witness, should enter those peaceful abodes which were then distinguished for the industry and sobriety, the happy and holy lives of their inmates. The first nunnery established in Northumbria was at Hartlepool, A. D. 620. Here St. Hilda, a niece of king Edwin, who had received baptism from Paulinus, chose the life of a recluse, and at an advanced age founded the abbey of Whitby, which she governed with great wisdom, prudence, and piety; and where she died in 680. Her example was followed by many others of the highest rank, and the sisters and daughters of kings founded monasteries in all parts of the island.

The most noted among those of that period, is the abbey of Coldingham, a place of which little is known except as connected with the monastery that adorned it. It was situated in a province in Northumbria called Merch, or the marshes in the shire of Berwick, which in later times became subject alternately to the English and the Scots. And its venerable ruins are said to have presented a stately and imposing

appearance to the eye of the visitor as late as A. D. 1610. It was honored as the residence of some of the most distinguished matrons and maidens in England. In the early part of the seventh century, Ebba, aunt to king Egfrid, daughter of king Ethelfrid, and half sister of king Oswy, was abbess of this monastery, when Wilfrid, archbishop of York, having lost the favor of the king, appealed to the pope to settle their differences and re-establish him in his see. This appeal so offended the king, that on his return to England he imprisoned him nine months. Ebba, whose mind appears to have been deeply imbued with the spirit of the Gospel of peace, acted on this occasion the blessed part of peacemaker, and induced the king by her representations and entreaties to release the archbishop and suffer him to depart from his kingdom. And it was not till the king's death that a part of his diocese was restored to him. The anger of the king against Wilfrid appears to have arisen from his expensive and luxurious manner of living, exceeding in state that of the king himself, and thereby departing from the simple rule of his Christian profession. Egfrid, who had some reason to fear the encroachments — on his rights — of this ambitious man, summoned Theodore, archbishop of Canterbury, to hear his cause. Theodore appears to have disapproved the course of Wilfrid, for he proposed that his large diocese should be divided into two, and that he should abandon the splendor in which he had hitherto indulged, and assume a more modest and becoming style of living. This Wilfrid positively refused to do, and he was accordingly deposed from his see and banished from Northumbria. The continuation of his course it is not our purpose to follow here, but his activity and zeal in the diffusion of the knowledge of the Gospel, his great learning, his introducing many things useful and ornamental to the church, had made him justly respected and beloved by Ebba and many others who had experienced the benefits of his improvements —

such as glass for the windows of churches, tight roofs to their holy houses, and ornamented copies of the Sacred Scriptures. The character of this first Ebba — for there are two mentioned in the Saxon chronicles — was that of a woman of distinguished piety and devotedness to religion. The rule which governed most of the monasteries of Britain was that of St. Basil, which enjoined an active and industrious mode of life. They were the seats of piety, of learning, of civilization and the arts. Their inmates were the chroniclers and historians of the times, both ecclesiastical and civil. They were not all monks, but generally one or two priests lived with them for the purpose of religious instruction and worship. Their rule of life required them to meet seven times in the day to offer a short prayer and sing a hymn or psalm of praise to God — at nine o'clock — at twelve — at three — at sunset — at nine in the evening, and again at midnight. The rest of the day was diligently occupied with such labors as their own support and the need of the surrounding population required — cultivating the ground, instructing the people, compounding medicines for the sick, preparing food for the hungry, and clothing for the naked.

Ebba herself was a bright and shining example, in those times, of learning and of Christian love. Her wisdom was exceeded only by her piety; and she gave in her daily life and behavior such a bright example of devotion, that she became renowned throughout England, as a model by which all abbesses should frame their lives and train up those committed to their supervision. As her years increased, her self-denial became more active. She herself waited upon a certain number of sick, aged and infirm persons, and spoke words of instruction and heavenly consolation to their distressed souls, and by her gentle assiduities led them to repose their trust and confidence in their Saviour. That life of temperance and self-denial — of chastened thoughts and feeling, which it had now been her sole object for many

years to practise, seemed blessed to her in the end. She lived to an advanced age without experiencing the sufferings of those infirmities which she had been so long employed in alleviating. Her last days were chiefly spent in earnest and fervent supplications before the altar, and, like Anna the prophetess of old, she departed not from the temple of the Lord. It was her delight to contemplate and dwell upon the thought of her Redeemer in his Sanctuary. And as it had been her desire that death might find her actively and understandingly engaged in prayer and praise, she breathed out her soul with the words — nunc dimittis — gently dying on her lips. So pure an example of a holy life was not suffered to pass unregarded, and in the succeeding age she was revered as a saint, and a church in Oxford is still named in her honor.

A century and a half passed away, and the venerable abbey of Coldingham still held its high reputation for sanctity and devotion. The fragrance which the pure spirit of the first abbess had shed around it, seemed to hover over it still, and chasten every thing worldly by the remembrance of her blest example. Changes great and lasting, meanwhile, had taken place in all around. The Heptarchy was resolved into one kingdom, and a more settled form of civil government was beginning to show its beneficial results, when a danger menaced the kingdom, and threatened to destroy all that was valuable and sacred, and to bring all parts under the sway of Paganism. This was the invasion of the Danes. Small parties of these Pagan pirates had, as early as A. D. 737, landed on the coast and pillaged whatever came in their way. A few years later, the abbey of Lindisfarne was burnt and the monks slain by these ravagers, and again at Wearmouth they burnt another monastery, but were themselves slain before they could regain their ships. The southern and eastern coasts were principally exposed to their incursions. Their ob-

ject appears at first to have been robbery and pillage, and they directed their principal attacks against the monasteries and convents; judging those places to be the depositories of valuable goods and treasure, and their inmates the least capable of defending themselves. In the reign of Ethelred, the brother of Alfred the Great, the most dreadful incursion was made. In the year of our Lord 867, a large army, under the command of Inguar and Hubba, landed in the north and commenced the subjugation of the whole country. The father of these warriors, Rognor Logbrod, had been taken prisoner in a former attempt on the island, and had been inhumanly thrown into a cavern filled with venomous serpents, where he had been left to expire by their tormenting stings, a punishment and a conduct little worthy of a Christian conqueror. The brothers had now the double principle of revenge and cupidity. Their standard was a raven, which they persuaded their soldiers to believe, was miraculously furnished them, and whose disgusting propensities were to be their example. They resolved to make utter desolation wherever they set their foot, and for the accomplishment of this object, they put to death young and old, shamefully entreating matrons and maidens, burning, pillaging, and destroying every thing that lay in their path. The report of their merciless cruelty spread to every hamlet, and filled the hearts of the weak and defenceless with terror and dismay. Many were tempted to flee and seek a secure hiding-place in the mountains of Wales, and the bishop of St. Cuthbert's monastery, remembering the dying charge of its aged founder, that they should flee rather than submit to the rule of the pagans, placed the bones of the saint in a stone coffin, and collecting the consecrated vessels, manuscripts and church furniture, they, with a large company of men, women, and children, set out for the wilds of Cumberland, and thence passing into Scotland, they remained there till peace and quiet were restored under the reign of Alfred.

Not so, however, with the helpless inhabitants of the villages situated in the course these invaders had taken. Their throats were cut, and all the indignities which cruelty could devise were practised on their palpitating bodies. The monastery of Coldingham, whose inmates were from the most noble families in the kingdom, lay directly in the path of the Danes. Their abbess bore the still venerated name of Ebba, and her holy life emulated that of her predecessor. She saw with anguish the approach of these fearful ravishers. She cast her eyes on the young, the lovely, and innocent beings intrusted to her maternal charge, and knew not how to protect or rescue them from their impending calamity. In her extremity she spent whole nights in solitary vigil, weeping in distress of heart, and praying to be directed aright in the fulfilment of her station and the discharge of her duty. At length a vision was vouchsafed to her mind, excited, and worn with fatigue, of an innumerable company of martyrs, with palms in their hands, singing the song of victory, and a voice seemed to ask her the question, "Dost thou, Ebba, fear to bear witness to the truth, and to set the noble example of suffering for *His* sake, who endured the agonies of the cross for thy salvation? Let love wax purer and more devoted as the trial grows sharper." This beatific vision brought resolution to her sinking spirits — restored her faith, and dispelled all fear. Her decision was taken, and a holy calm and tranquillity pervaded her bosom. She assembled around her all the sisters of her community, and, according to the chroniclers of the olden times, thus addressed them: "Beloved daughters, how dear your peace and welfare are to my heart no tongue can tell, neither can I express the anguish which I have felt at the prospect of your danger and desolation. There have lately come into these parts most wicked pagans, destitnte of all humanity, who roam in large bands through the country, sparing neither age nor sex, destroying churches, murdering eccle-

siastics, ravishing holy women, wasting and consuming every thing in their way. Many have fled from their approach and are now wandering afflicted and desolate among the mountains; but whither can we fly? The monasteries to the north and the south have been demolished, and our fathers and brethren are fled before the numbers of these wicked men. There is but one course left open to us; if, therefore, you will follow my example, I have good hope that through the Divine mercy we shall escape the rage and brutality of these barbarians, and preserve our vestal purity." The whole assembly of virgins weeping around her promised, amid their sighs and groans, implicit obedience to her maternal commands. The abbess, then, with a heroic spirit, affording an example to all the holy sisters, and to all succeeding ages that she preferred death to degradation, seized a sharp instrument and mutilated her face, cutting off her nose and upper lip, rendering herself a horrible spectacle to those who stood by. Filled with admiration at this astonishing deed, the whole assembly hastened to follow her maternal example, and in like manner destroyed their beauty, which, they feared, would attract these cruel persecutors and make them their prey.

With the morrow's dawn, after this most wonderful and bloody deed, came those tyrants to disgrace these holy women and to pillage and burn the monastery. When they had entered within the walls, the abbess Ebba met them, holding before her the sacred symbols of her religion, and, accompanied by her virgins thus mutilated and covered with their own blood from their head to their feet, presented such a spectacle as for a moment struck these ruthless invaders with astonishment and awe. The Danes turned away from the sight, unable to endure the shocking spectacle presented so suddenly and unexpectedly before them, and the soldiers would also have respected the holy house, if Inguar and Hubba, with hearts harder than ferocious beasts,

had not ordered them to return and burn the monastery with its inmates; which being done by these workers of iniquity, this ancient monastery of Coldingham was destroyed, and the devoted Ebba with her holy virgins attained the glory of martyrdom.

This brief sketch, drawn from the authors of olden times, shows to what barbarities the first Christian communities were subjected, and should raise in our bosoms feelings of thankfulness and gratitude that our lot is fallen in a happy and peaceful time, when we can enjoy the blessings of Christianity and the rites of Christian worship, free from danger and fear of persecution.

Whatever may now be thought of monastic institutions — however unnecessary they may be in the present state of society, they were doubtless productive of much good in the early ages of the Church and in the then condition of the world, and contributed vastly, on their original plan and order, to the spread of religion and the conversion of the pagan. The same causes and reasons for them do not now exist. The purposes for which they were then useful, are provided for in other and better ways. The general diffusion of common schools — the colleges and seminaries of learning — the provision of hospitals where the sick are cared for, and houses in which the poor are fed and clothed and the aged and infirm are maintained — the ample means of theological education and of knowledge generally — the provision of all these things tends to render monasteries unnecessary at the present day — even if we had no other reasons against them. And as to withdrawing from the world and shutting up one's self like a recluse for the purpose of a more devotedly Christian life, there seems to be but little of the bearing of the cross of Christ in it. His disciples are not required to remove themselves from the world, but to keep themselves unspotted from its evil, and meanwhile to be daily employed in acts of self-denial — of patience — of forbearance — of charity.

We should err greatly from the truth, however, if we were to judge the early monasteries by the general character which similar institutions bore in later times. Let the sentence of condemnation fall on the guilty, not on the innocent. Men now-a-days have been so long accustomed to hear of the idleness, the ignorance and profligacy of monks, that it requires no small effort to believe that the monks of the primitive Church were not as idle, ignorant, and profligate as those in the days of Wickliffe. But history and the remaining monuments of their active zeal disprove the charge. They were both learned and industrious, themselves eminent examples of active virtue, enduring hardships as good soldiers and pioneers in the cause of religion, indefatigable teachers and promoters of learning and industry, of civilization and the common arts of life. And many of the bright and shining lights in the primitive days of the Church were men of this order.

HILDA OF WHITBY.

"For out of the olde fieldes, as men saithe,
Cometh all this newe corn fro yere to yere;
And out of olde bookes, in good faithe,
Cometh all this new science that men lere."

CHAUCER.

THE history of Christendom during the period immediately preceding what are commonly termed the dark ages, is pregnant with instruction deeply interesting to the thoughtful Christian mind. A season of transition from the purity and truth of Apostolic times to the error and superstition which finally called for and enforced the Reformation, it both suggests many grave questions of practical importance, and also furnishes the material, or facts answering to them. How came it about, that a heaven-born religion, all purity, simplicity, and light, degenerated into low and earthly conceits, grovelling amid the darkest superstitions and the grossest errors? This great change, to which no honest and unprejudiced mind can be insensible, was not the work of a day: Christian men, we conceive, did not all at once corrupt their holy faith, and prostitute the sanctity of their calling at the command of Sin, the World, and the Devil. The citadel of man's hopes, on whose walls the hands of a crucified Saviour had set up the blood-stained cross, whose defences apostles and martyrs had nobly main-

tained even unto the death, was not surrendered at the first summons: too many a Christian soul had found safety within its walls, and passed from its defence to the enjoyment of their reward: upon the shoulders of too many the mantle of ascending and triumphing saints had fallen to allow the love of Christ who had redeemed them suddenly to grow cold, or the joys of the Holy Ghost, shed abroad in their hearts, suddenly to depart. There must have been a season of transition more or less strongly marked by the contest between light and darkness, holiness and sin. The cross of Christ, upheld by twelve Apostolic hands and borne onwards by the host of saints and martyrs, had nobly fought its way amid Jewish hate, Grecian scorn, and Roman power. True, the wealthy and the noble had mocked at and despised the Crucified; true, that all which the world calls great had trampled upon His humble followers; but in the religion itself, in the faith of the Cross, there was both truth and life—truth and life which no neglect could chill, no persecution by men or devils could destroy. Gloriously, in might irresistible, the religion of Jesus travelled onward until crowned heads bowed to its majesty, and became childlike obedient to its teachings. The cross, waving over the standards of imperial Rome, proclaims the power of its unsullied truth.

From this point of time the period of transition commences. Worldly wealth and power had in vain assaulted the citadel of the Faith. Now, however, by the door of Cæsar's palace, they came within, and the evil which heathen hands had failed of doing, the Church's own children accomplished. Can this be possible? Even so. The suicidal acts by which the Church sacrificed the faith and purity of the Gospel were not so meant. The body of the faithful were, and long continued to be, true-hearted and sincere. Satan, however, deceived them; arrayed as an angel of light he decked earth's glories with the robes of heaven, and substituting the fictitious for the real,

where he could not overthrow by outward assault, he undermined by secret and subtle misrepresentations; at length, evil-minded and designing men, creeping into power, let slip no opportunity of advancing their own selfish interests, working mischief to the holy faith which they had sworn to defend. This working of Satan within the bosom of the Church, and triumphing in her ruin, even while called by her name, imparts a peculiar and absorbing interest to this period of history.

The foregoing thoughts were suggested while looking over the historical memorials of Hilda, abbess of Streaneshalh,* whose name stands at the head of our article. The best and fullest account of this holy woman is furnished by the venerable Bede, and presents, we think, a truthful picture of the age in which she flourished.

THE LIFE AND DEATH OF THE ABBESS HILDA.

"In the year of the incarnation of our Lord 680, the most religious servant of Christ, Hilda, abbess of the monastery that is called Streaneshalh, after having performed many heavenly works on earth, passed from thence to receive the rewards of the heavenly life, on the 15th day of the Kalends of December, at the age of sixty-six years; the first thirty of which she spent living most nobly in the secular habit; and more nobly dedicated the remaining half to our Lord in a monastic life. For she was nobly born, being the daughter of Hereric, nephew to king Edwin, with which king she also embraced the faith and mysteries of Christ at the preaching of Paulinas, the first bishop of the Northumbrians, of blessed memory, and preserved the same undefiled till she obtained the full enjoyment thereof in heaven. Re-

* This place was afterwards called Whitby, in the North Riding of Yorkshire.

solving to quit the secular habit, and to serve Him alone, she withdrew into the province of the East Angles, for she was allied to the king, being desirous to pass over from thence into France, to forsake her native country and all she had, and so live a stranger for our Lord in the monastery of Cale, that she might with more ease attain to the eternal kingdom in heaven; because her sister Heresuit, mother to Aldulf, king of the East Angles, at that time living in the same monastery under regular discipline, was waiting for her eternal reward. Being led by her example she continued a whole year in the aforesaid province, with the design of going abroad; afterwards bishop Aidan being recalled home, he gave her the land of one family on the north side of the river Wire; where she also led a monastic life a year, with very few companions. After which she was made abbess in the monastery called Heortheu, which monastery had been founded, not long before, by the religious servant of Christ, Heru, who is said to have been the first woman that in the province of the Northumbrians took upon her the habit and life of a nun, being consecrated by Bishop Aidan; but she, soon after she had founded that monastery, went away to the city of Kalcaceaster, and there fixed her dwelling. Hilda, the servant of Christ, being set over that monastery, began immediately to reduce all things to a regular system, according as she had been instructed by learned men; for bishop Aidan and other religious men that knew her and loved her, frequently visited and diligently instructed her, because of her innate wisdom and inclination to the service of God. When she had for some years governed this monastery, wholly intent upon establishing a regular life, it happened that she also undertook either to build or to arrange a monastery in the place called Streaneshalh, which work she industriously performed; for she put this monastery under the same regular discipline as she had done the former, and taught there the strict obser-

vance of justice, piety, chastity, and other virtues, and particularly of peace and charity; so that, after the example of the primitive Church, no person was there rich, and none poor, all being in common to all, and none having any property. Her prudence was so great, that not indifferent persons, but even kings and princes, as occasion offered, asked and received her advice; she obliged those who were under her direction to attend so much to reading of the Holy Scriptures, and to exercise themselves so much in works of justice, that many might be there found fit for the ecclesiastical degree, that is, to serve at the altar: in short, we afterwards saw five bishops taken out of that monastery, and all of them men of singular merit and sanctity, whose names were Bosa, Actla, Oftfor, John, and Wilfrid." —— "Thus, this servant of Christ, abbess Hilda, whom all that knew her called mother, for her singular piety and grace, was not only an example of good life to those that lived in her monastery, but afforded occasion of amendment and salvation to many who lived at a distance, to whom the fame was brought of her industry and virtue; for it was necessary that the dream which her mother, Bregusuit, had, during her infancy, should be fulfilled. At the time that her husband, Hereric, lived in banishment, under Cerdic, king of the Britons, where he was also poisoned, she fancied, in a dream, that she was seeking for him, most carefully, and could find no sign of him any where; but after having used all her industry to seek him, she found a most precious jewel under her garment, which, whilst she was looking on it very attentively, cast such a light as spread itself throughout all Britain; which dream was brought to pass in her daughter that we speak of, whose life was a bright example, not only to herself, but to all who desired to live well. When she had governed this monastery many years, it pleased Him who has made such merciful provision for our salvation, to give her holy soul the trial of a long sickness, to the end that, according to the

Apostles' example, her virtue might be perfected in infirmity. Falling into a fever, she fell into a violent heat, and was afflicted with the same for six years, continually; during all which time she never failed either to return thanks to her Maker, or publicly and privately to instruct the flock committed to her charge; for by her own example she admonished all persons to serve God dutifully in perfect health, and always to return thanks to him in adversity, or bodily infirmity. In the seventh year of her sickness, the distemper turning inward, she approached her last day, and about cock-crowing, having received the holy communion to further her on her way, and having called together the servants of Christ that were within the same monastery, she admonished them to preserve evangelic peace among themselves, and with all others; and as she was making her speech, she joyfully saw death approaching, or, if I may speak in the words of our Lord, passed from death to life."

The historian also furnishes an excellent stand-point from which to estimate the character of Hilda, by subjoining the following account of the visions attending her decease:—"That same night it pleased Almighty God by a manifest vision to make known her death in another monastery, at a distance from hers, which she had built that same year, and is called Akeues. There was in that monastery a certain nun called Bega, who, having dedicated her virginity to God, had served him upwards of thirty years in monastical conversation. This nun being then in the dormitory of the sisters, on a sudden heard the well known sound of a bell in the air, which used to awake and call them to prayers, when any one of them was taken out of this world, and opening her eyes, as she thought, she saw the top of the house open, and a strong light pour in from above; looking earnestly upon that light, she saw the soul of the aforesaid servant of God in that same light, attended and conducted to Heaven by angels. Then awaking, and seeing the other sisters lying round about her, she perceived

that what she had seen was either in a dream, or a vision; and rising immediately in a great fright, she ran to the virgin who then presided in the monastery instead of the abbess, and whose name was Frigyth, and with many tears and sighs, told her that the abbess Hilda, mother of them all, had departed this life, and had in her sight ascended to eternal bliss, and to the company of the inhabitants of Heaven, with a great light, and with angels conducting her. Frigyth having heard it awoke all the sisters, and calling them to the church, admonished them to pray and sing psalms for her soul; which they did during the remainder of the night, and at the break of day the brothers came, with news of her death, from the place where she had died. Thus it was by Heaven happily ordained, that when some saw her departure out of this world, the others should be acquainted with her admittance into the spiritual life which is eternal. These monasteries are about thirteen miles distant from each other. It is also reported that her death was, in a vision, made known to one of the holy virgins who loved her most passionately, in the same monastery where the said servant of God died. This nun saw her soul ascend to Heaven in the company of angels; and this she declared, the very same hour that it happened, to those servants of Christ that were with her; and awakened them to pray for her soul, even before the rest of the congregation had heard of her death. The truth of which was known to the whole monastery in the morning. This same nun was at that same time, with some other servants of Christ, in the remotest part of the monastery, where the women newly converted were wont to be upon trial, till they were regularly instructed, and taken into the society of the congregation."

At the first glance Bede has stated little regarding Hilda personally, but a more thoughtful perusal reveals a full-length picture. The narrative carries us into the midst of pagan England, at that in-

teresting period when the bright rays of Christianity were with renewed brilliancy darting across her moral horizon and dissipating the gross darkness of barbarism and paganism. "Not many mighty, not many noble," runs the record, "are called,"—and the record has in every age proved true. In England, however, if anywhere, exceptions to this rule were among the first converts after the mission of St. Augustine. The faith of Christ, it is true, was still burning brightly in the breast of many an unsubdued Briton, and needed no rekindling at the hands of the new comers: room, however, there was, vast and unoccupied, in which Augustine might work the work of an evangelist had such been his sole object. Coming, however, from imperial Rome, the representative of the more than imperial successor of St. Peter, while one edge of his sword fell on for Christ, the other edge was wielded for our lord the Pope. To believe as Rome taught, and to do as Rome bade, were essentials in the creed offered by Augustine to the Britons. Filled, moreover, with the growing temporal power and dignity of the papacy, its missionary sought the halls of kings and nobles as the surest and speediest way of converting their subjects. The burden of the message, we are fain to believe, was the Gospel of reconciliation in and by the merits of a crucified Saviour. Hence we rejoice that pagan error was made to fall, as ever fall it must, before Gospel truth. We rejoice in such a trophy to the power and the purity of our holy religion as the conversion of the abbess Hilda exhibits. Born amid the splendors, comparatively, of the court, and surrounded by the religion of her fathers, with the potent associations and powerful hold which our fathers' religion, be it, *per se*, what it may, always has, Hilda, in the prime of life, sacrifices all her early associations, and at the bidding of the Gospel message sets her face Zion-ward, an humble disciple of the Lord Jesus. Hilda's resolve thus to act was no freak of youthful imagination, or of an excited fancy. Vigorous in

body, shown by a long life of constant labors, possessed of a powerful and controlling mind, abundantly manifested in her subsequent career, Hilda moreover made the great change in her religious life under the sanction and guidance of a mature judgment. These considerations and the testimony of her well-spent life leave no room to doubt the genuineness of her conversion. The change exhibits the mighty power of the Holy Ghost operating upon her heart and conscience, and winning a truly noble woman from error to the faith of a crucified Redeemer, taking her from out the moral degradation of heathenism to be a jewel in the diadem of our Lord and Master. Self-sacrificing in devotion, diligent in the duties of her calling, faithful and sedulous in the study of the Holy Scriptures, and zealous in enjoining their perusal upon all under her influence and control, her example shines brightly through the long lapse of time. Christian woman, desirous of serving God and benefiting man, learn of Hilda.

In estimating the character of Hilda we should bear in mind that grievous errors, both in doctrine and practice were, in her day, leavening and enervating the teaching of the Church. Monachism, potent in its claim to a remote antiquity, and redolent with the sanctity of many a venerated name, had taken fast hold upon the religious mind of both clergy and laity. In its early and pure days it certainly held out many and strong inducements to earnest and sincere but, as we think, mistaken minds seeking the attainment of greater holiness and growth in the divine life. But monachism in the age of Hilda was fast losing its original character. Wealth and worldly motives were, already, sapping its foundations, and soon indolence and superstition and error sat in its high places. Even Hilda imparted to the system, by her native energy, good sense, and Christian character, far more of vitality than she received. The student of ecclesiastical history knows, full well, that most, if not all, of the errors in doctrine and

practice, which made the fifteenth century a night of Egyptian darkness to the Church, are traceable to monachism as their cradle. Knowing this he is not surprised in finding many pernicious errors prevalent even in the time of Hilda. Purgatory, prayers for the dead, false views of the eucharist, and errors akin, shadow forth the coming night. Contrasted with the doctrines of the New Testament, or with the teaching of the Church, in the days of Constantine, they betoken, nay prove that the Church was in a state of transition, fatal alike to its purity and its soundness. Much, however, remains to cheer the heart of the Christian. He can recall the example of Hilda, the nobility and energizing power of her holy faith. A Christian woman is holding out to her nation God's word, a light unto their feet, and a lamp unto their path; teaching them "the strict observance of justice, piety, chastity, and other virtues; and particularly of peace and charity:" in the spirit of an Apostle, "That denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world."

Living in more favored circumstances, in the noonday of Gospel truth, in the profession of a pure faith, let not Hilda rise up in the judgment and condemn our life and conversation.

EDITHA.

The period during which the present one of those included among the "Women of Early Christianity" flourished, is so much later than any of those with whom she is associated, that it may seem that some apology is due for venturing to place her on the list. In truth, had the selection been made by the Editor he should have preferred to have included among the holy women of early days a number of those who lived nearer apostolic times; but as he had not that privilege he is glad that one so worthy as Editha has been taken even out of the Dark Ages, as if in this way it might be made manifest that goodness and purity and truth had not failed among God's children, and that papal domination and tyranny had not crushed the spirit of those who sought to worship and serve the Lord Jesus Christ. We shall give such facts as have been preserved by the chroniclers respecting Editha of Wilton, begging the reader to make all due allowance for the peculiarities of the language and the strong expressions used by him of Malmsbury, whom archbishop Usher has styled "the chief of our historians."

The author is speaking of certain noble ladies of whom he says in general, "my commendations shall also glance at the names of some

maidens of the royal race, though I must claim indulgence for being brief upon the subject, not through fastidiousness, but because I am unacquainted with their miracles." One of the most distinguished of these was Editha, who belonged to that interesting class, the princess-nuns of the Anglo-Saxon race. Her father's name was Edgar, a king whom, despite his faults and vices, William of Malmsbury terms "the honor and delight of the English." Her mother was Wilfrida, a beautiful nun, whom king Edgar had carried off forcibly from her seclusion. To use Mrs. Jameson's words, "for this sacrilege, Edgar was placed by St. Dunstan under an interdict for seven years. Wilfrida, as soon as she could escape from the power of the king, again took refuge in her convent, and there brought forth a daughter, Editha, whom she educated in all the learning of the times, and who was a marvel for her beauty as well as her sanctity and her learning. She refused to attend her father's court, but expended the rich dowry he gave her in founding the nunnery at Wilton, which, since the Reformation, has been the seat of the earls of Pembroke."* It is of this saintly lady that the ancient chronicler gives us the following account:—

"St. Editha, the daughter of king Edgar, ennobles, with her relics, the monastery of Wilton, where she was buried, and cherishes that place with her regard, where, trained from her infancy in the school of the Lord, she gained his favor by unsullied virginity, and constant watchings: repressing the pride of her high birth by her humility. I have heard one circumstance of her, from persons of elder days, which greatly staggered the opinions of men: for she led them into false conclusions from the splendor of her costly dress; being always habited in richer garb than the sanctity of her profession seemed to

* Mrs. Jameson's "*Legends of the Monastic Orders*," p. 199.

require. On this account, being openly rebuked by St. Ethelwold, she is reported to have answered with equal point and wit, that the judgment of God was true and irrefragable, while that of man, alone, was fallible, for pride might exist even under the garb of wretchedness: wherefore, 'I think,' said she, 'that a mind may be as pure beneath these vestments, as under your tattered furs.' The bishop was deeply struck by this speech; admitting its truth by his silence, and blushing with pleasure that he had been chastised by the sparkling repartee of the lady, he held his peace. St. Dunstan had observed her, at the consecration of the church of St. Denys, which she had built out of affection to that martyr, frequently stretching out her right thumb, and making the sign of the cross upon her forehead; and being extremely delighted at it, 'May this finger,' he exclaimed, 'never see corruption:' and immediately, while celebrating mass, he burst into such a flood of tears, that he alarmed with his faltering voice an assistant standing near him; who inquiring the reason of it, 'Soon,' said he, 'shall this blooming rose wither; soon shall this beloved bird take its flight to God, after the expiration of six weeks from this time.' The truth of the prelate's prophecy was very shortly fulfilled; for on the appointed day, this noble, firmly-minded lady, expired in her prime, at the age of twenty-three years. Soon after, the same saint saw, in a dream, St. Denys kindly taking the virgin by the hand, and strictly enjoining, by Divine command, that she should be honored by her servants on earth, in the same manner as she was venerated by her spouse and master in heaven. Miracles multiplying at her tomb, it was ordered, that her virgin body should be taken up, and exalted in a shrine; when the whole of it was found resolved into dust, except the finger, with the abdomen and parts adjacent. In consequence of which, some debate arising, the virgin herself appeared, in a dream, to one of those who had seen her remains, saying (in

substance), it was no wonder that such a result as this had happened, since the purity of her life, and the inviolable chastity in which she had passed her days, had exempted her mortal remains from the usual fate of perishing bodies.

"Truly both of these virgins (i. e. Eadburga of Winchester, and Editha of Wilton) support their respective monasteries by their merits; each of them being filled with large assemblies of nuns, who answer obediently to the call of their mistresses and patronesses, inviting them to virtue. Happy the man, who becomes partaker of those virgin orisons which the Lord Jesus favors with kind regard. For, as I have remarked of the nuns of Shaftesbury, all virtues have long since quitted the earth, and retired to heaven; or, if any where, (but this I must say with the permission of holy men,) are to be found only in the hearts of nuns; and surely, those women are highly to be praised, who, regardless of the weakness of their sex, vie with each other in the preservation of their continence, and by such means ascend, triumphant, to heaven."*

In this brief narrative of Editha, her character is irradiated by that halo of heavenly glory which alway distinguishes the true servants of God, "Holiness unto the Lord."—We envy not that man's feelings, be he a Christian, or not, reading a narrative like the foregoing, who, is wholly taken up with the undoubted abuses of the age, the pretended miracles and visions, the gross ignorance, or, worse than ignorance, the abominable wickedness of Churchmen, who, imposing upon the simplicity of their people, acted as though any trick or deceit was justifiable, provided only it be employed in advancing (their fiction of) the Church. The morality of these doings is no more endurable to us, than it is to the most honest hater of all trickery in religion: we despise both it and its authors. And yet

* William of Malmsbury's "*Chronicle*, p. 245.

may we not rejoice that God has never, not even in the darkest night, left himself without witness in the lives of his professed followers? All Israel, say the captious, have bowed the knee unto their idols, but many an Editha attests by a life of holiness that a remnant was still humbly obedient to the true Jehovah. Having drunk of the knowledge of a crucified Saviour, having heard from inspired lips, "Be ye holy," love to Jesus as her Saviour filling her soul, Editha sought after inward purity as a priceless gem, an ornament meet for those awaiting the coming bridegroom. Earnest-minded and zealous in her search, shall errors in the use of means, or false incentives to duty at the hands of her spiritual advisers, lead sensible men into the folly of undervaluing the spirit which animated, and the devotion which sustained her search; aye, and even the approving recognition of Heaven which crowned her efforts with success? A better spirit should direct our perusal of this and like narratives. Let the light of God's pure word ever illumine our path, and direct aright our feet, to the rejection and condemnation of all errors, both of doctrine and of practice; but let not zeal, however praiseworthy in itself, for the truth dazzle and blind our eyes to the purity, and the essentially right motives, of any humble follower of our common Lord and Master.

Are we sure, moreover, that the popular judgment which has pronounced the age in which Editha flourished one of darkness, is borne out by the facts? Certainly not, so far as the Church of God is concerned. When the Roman empire was tottering to its fall, when rude barbarism from abroad and ruffianly soldiery at home shook down its walls, Christianity alone withstood the shock. The divinity which dwelt within the Christian religion enabled it to breast the storm, endowed its followers, faithful even to the death, with strength to lift up the standard of the cross amid the incoming flood of heathenism. The onset was indeed fierce, and the struggle deadly. What, if that

standard, in the hour of triumph, carried from the field some of the defilements of the contest, some marks of contact with the hands of the enemy? Is it matter of wonder? matter of condemnation? Thank God rather, Christian man, that sufficient of that banner was left to stamp it genuine, and to rally again its faithful followers. When that banner again took the field, marching into the very heart of heathenism, into lands where the name of Christ had never been known, never even mentioned, again it triumphed, and again in every land idolatry and cruelty fell before it.

Aside from the life-giving power of religion, which works unseen upon the individual heart, and against which the gates of darkness have never fully triumphed, aside from this transforming power, the religious institutions which the Church every where planted became the houses, and the only houses, of learning. In the eloquent language of one who has made the period to which we refer a study, and who possesses both the eye to trace, and the judgment to discriminate, "We know that, but for the monks, the light of liberty, and literature, and science, had been for ever extinguished; and that for six centuries, there existed for the thoughtful, the gentle, the inquiring, the devout spirit, no peace, no security, no home, but the cloister. There, Learning trimmed her lamp; there Contemplation 'pruned her wings;' there the traditions of Art, preserved from age to age by lonely studious men, kept alive in form and color the idea of a beauty beyond that of earth,—of a might beyond that of the spear and shield,—of a Divine sympathy with suffering humanity."*

* Mrs. Jameson's "*Legends of the Monastic Orders*," p. xix.

THE END.

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